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# Contents

| Article                                                                                                                                     | Page    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. A Fresh Look at the Origin and Forms of Early Temples in the Kathmandu Valley<br><i>Prayag Raj Sharma</i>                                | 1-25    |
| 2. Legislative Elite and the Nepalese Parliament: A Study of Their Class Characteristics<br><i>Thomas Meyer</i><br><i>Suresh C. Chalise</i> | 27-64   |
| 3. The Implicit Mode of Domination in Nepal: Fatalism and Bahunism as the Main Causes of Underdevelopment<br><i>Yoji Kamata</i>             | 65-81   |
| 4. The Newars: The Indigenous Population of the Kathmandu Valley in the Modern State of Nepal<br><i>Bal Gopal Shrestha</i>                  | 83-117  |
| <b>Research Note</b>                                                                                                                        |         |
| 5. Nepalese Immigrants in the United States of America<br><i>Ramesh K. Dhungel</i>                                                          | 119-134 |
| 6. The Fluidity of Ethnicity: The Case of Nepali and Newar Identity in the United States<br><i>Bina Gubhaju</i>                             | 135-149 |
| 7. Selecting the Most Appropriate Means of Conserving the 55-Window Palace<br><i>Yogesh Raj, Hriday K. Hada</i><br><i>Rajan Vaidya</i>      | 151-161 |
| 8. ऐतिहासिक सामग्री<br>जंगबहादुर राणाको जीवनी र कृतिसंग सम्बद्ध: एक टिपोट<br><i>गंगा खरेल</i>                                               | 163-170 |
| <b>Review Article</b>                                                                                                                       |         |
| 9. Learning Nepali the SOAS Way<br><i>Mark Turin</i>                                                                                        | 171-182 |

## **A FRESH LOOK AT THE ORIGIN AND FORMS OF EARLY TEMPLES IN THE KATHMANDU VALLEY<sup>1</sup>**

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There is a considerable literature by now on the study of the temple architecture of Nepal (meaning primarily the temples of the Kathmandu Valley) (Bernier 1971; Sharma 1968, 1973; Banerjee 1980; Slusser 1982; Tiwari:1988). In all these works (as well as in works not cited above), however, the treatment with regard to the origin of these temples is generally facile and based on assumptions, not subborted by any hard evidence. In accordance with these assumptions, the so-called "pagoda" temples of the Kathmandu Valley, in their present form, are fairly early in date, starting from the Licchavi period itself (c. 5th-8th century), if not earlier. The characteristic features of these "pagodas", made of wood, bricks and tiles, consist of their multiple roofs arranged in tiers, giving them an appearance of many storied structures.

These multi-tiered temples of Kathmandu Valley, at least in their outer appearance, look rather similar to those found over a wide geographical region, extending from India's Himachal Pradesh to the coastal temples of south Malabar, and further afield, as far away as Bali in Indonesia, and in China, Korea and Japan. Scholars have been led from this, to variously suggest the origin of the Nepalese storied temple from diverse sources, some ascribing it to China (Fergusson 1910; Brown 1959), others to India (Snellgrove 1961; Banerjee 1980)<sup>2</sup>, and still others advocating their indigenous origin in Nepal itself (Regmi 1960; Bernier 1971; Sharma 1973; Tiwari 1988). The origin of these temples, therefore, remains a little clouded and under dispute. Their existence in Nepal from the earliest period of its history, however, is implicitly accepted by one and all with little much questioning.

I am of the view that some revision may be necessary in this bland assertion, taking into consideration the history and development of the temple architecture in the Indian subcontinent as a whole. My proposition may appear a little speculative at this stage. I do, however, strongly feel that there is far more consistency in this new line of reasoning. There are

some temples even today, around the Kathmandu Valley which, I believe, could actually be the surviving relics of their older architectural forms, and be examples of their lingering tradition. I will mention them a little later.

Before describing what I mean by these early forms, let us first see what is said with regard to the evolution of temples in India. The construction of temples in India started only from the early Gupta period (c. 3rd-4th century). This is claimed on the testimony of no less a person than Percy Brown, an authority on this subject. He writes:

In the art of building, the progressive movements of fundamental significance are discernible, one relating to the aesthetic character, and the other to structural procedure. (1959:47)

By one such movement, he referred to an artistic activity of great creativity and sensibility in image-making (sculptural art), under which images of Hindu and Buddhist deities were made in response to their new sectarian needs in an ever increasing number, and, by the other, pointed to the new techniques of building in stone masonry that came to be introduced in the Gupta period, bringing forth the existence of structures called the "house of god" for the first time, wherein images of such gods were duly installed. He further writes:

The conception of a deity naturally called for some habitation, and so structural shrine came into being. The various stages through which the embryo Hindu temple passed are common to the growth of such edifices, first a leafy bower, then a reed hut, and afterwards a cella of wood and brick." (*Ibid*: 47).

He also goes on to suggest that these early Brahmanical temples had flat roofs in the beginning, and the idea of a tower over them was a slow and gradual process to evolve. Their culmination came much later and became evident only in the more mature temples of Orissa made around Bhuvaneshvara, and in those of Khajuraho in Central India of the mediaeval periods, most pronouncedly.

Much of our present idea about the Brahmanical temples of the early Licchavi period, be they of Vaisnava, Saiva or Sakta denominations, rests on a conjecture largely, deriving from one or two brief references to them in the contemporary inscriptional records, and from the accounts of the Chinese envoy in Nepal, Wang Hsien ts'ang, between c. 643 and 657, preserved in the T'ang Annals of China (Levi 1905 I). In an inscription of

Saka 388 (c. 466) of the Licchavi period, mention is made of the installation of a *sivalingam* in a *prasada* (Vajracharya: 1973:31). Similarly, in another famous Trivikrama inscription issued by King Manadeva I of Saka 389 (c. 467) from Lazimpat and Tilaganga, the image of Visnu is described as housed in a pretty *bhavana* (Vajracharya: *Ibid.* 34-35). In either cases the words *prasada* and *bhavana*, obviously, suggest some kind of a temple to have been made there. But beyond that we have little means of knowing about other details, such as the style or architecture of these temples, nor anything regarding their size, dimension, or the manner of roofing over them. These two expressions were generic words to describe a temple – big or small. They have been in constant use in the Kathmandu Valley since the Licchavi period, which continued down to the late Malla period. They were, in no way technical, architectural terms, referring to any temple styles as such. So, in my opinion, the terms *prasada* and *bhavana* could have described anything ranging from an ordinary cella, a niche, a tree-shrine, a sanctified area defined by a fence, a wall, or an open space<sup>3</sup> to a full-fledged temple built at a later date. It is my contention that at this early date these words most likely had referred to shrines built in more rudimentary forms in Nepal, by conforming to any of the first four types described above. The regular forms of temples in their multi-roofed or their *sikhara* versions followed only much later in the Kathmandu Valley, beginning from the mediaeval period onwards.

We should next examine here the use and popularity of the term *devakula* in the context of evolution of temples in the Kathmandu Valley. It is a word which, in my view, is most significant and germane to the idea of temple development in the Kathmandu Valley. The use of the word *devakula* is quite common in the Licchavi period. It is also seen used in the early mediaeval period one or two times. Although this word primarily described a temple or a shrine, at times its meaning could have a broader connotation, implying the deity residing in it, or referring to the people assigned to the service of the deity and to look after his temple. Under a landgrants and a land administration system that developed during this time in the Valley, different groups and communities of people were assigned a piece of land where they could reside, work and live off its income. They were usually groups belonging to one or the other of the religious sects. The *devakula panchalikas* was one such group receiving landgrants and the object of making these landgrants to them by the king or the ruler was to secure their services in the cause of the shrines or of the deities residing in them. Land to them was given under a system that was permanent in arrangement and remained inviolate for all times. This provided an enduring economic basis to pay the expenses that was necessary for carrying out the rituals and



maintenance work in these temples. The surplus income from the land would go to the sustenance of the members of the *devakula panchalikas* and be a source of livelihood for their family and kins. It was this practice which mainly became responsible for the emergence of distinct village communities in the Valley in the Licchavi period. Such village communities emerged everywhere centering around a deity, the practice of which, with some modifications, was continued in the mediaeval period and even later. The various Newar hamlets and settlements around the Kathmandu Valley today may be taken to be a true legacy in this *devakula* tradition. Such settlements have had invariably a principal shrine belonging to this or that deity in the midst of them (such shrines later on got transformed into the temples belonging to one or the other members of *astamatrika* goddesses), who were looked upon as their patron deity and their chief protector. An annual festival in honour of this deity was organized, that would become an occasion for celebration by the entire village. The idea of 'land for religious services' under a land endowment system became a pervasive religious/cultural/economic practice in the Kathmandu Valley from an early period on. This became quite an institution accepted and acknowledged at all levels, high and low, which popularly came to be known as the *guthi*. Under a *guthi* arrangement, a land would be donated by a donor (*danapati*) with a specific objective. Such a land was called the *guthi* land. The people who were entrusted with a temple work or with obligations to be carried out to a deity in accordance with the wishes of the donors, were called the *guthiyars*. The *guthi* system has long been in place and been firmly integrated into the Newar socio-religious and cultural practice. Even today, it stands like a bedrock to their distinctive way of life.

The origin and etymology of the later day Newari word *degala*, or *degah*, a popular term to designate a temple, is also quite relevant to explain here. Contrary to what people may generally like to believe, this word does not derive from the Sanskrit *devala*<sup>4</sup>, or *devalaya*, but, derives in all probability, from the earlier discussed *devakula*. I would propose the etymology of this word to be as follows: *Devakula* < *devakulika* < *dekula* < *deguda* or *degudi* < *degala* or *degah*. All these are terms which have been in actual use at different times in history, attested to by several sources. In several Licchavi inscriptions already cited, the word *devakula* finds frequently mentioned (Vajracharya:1973), viz., Sivaka *devakula* (*Ibid.* no. 22), Matin *devakula* (no.34), Sivagal *devakula* (no. 67), Bhiringaresvara *devakula* (no. 140), and Putti Narayana *devakula* (no. 143). The name Ganadeva *devakula* (no. 190) appears in a document of c. 876 just a little before the start of the Nepala Samvat at the borderline of the Licchavi and the mediaeval period. *Devakula* is mentioned in an inscription as late as NS 226 (c.1106) on the pedestal of

a gilded bronze of Visnu, Laksmi and Garuda, offered to Changu Narayana, and now preserved in the temple store there. The relevant line of this inscription reads as follows:

bhagavadbhaṭṭāraka viṣṇu śrī garuḍa pratimeyaṃ pratiṣṭhāpya  
śrī dolāśikharī bhaṭṭārakasya devakule praveśitā. (Khanal  
1983:155).

The term *degah*, designating a temple in Newari, actually seems nothing but to be a derivative of the Licchavi *devakula*. From the mediaeval period onwards, all private and public landgrants or land donations system got gradually subsumed under a single system, popularly called the *guthi*. Many settlements and villages around the Kathmandu Valley even today have a *guthi* organized at an all-village level in which all original residents of the village will become members of it. This is known as the *tawa guthi* or big *guthi*. The organization of the annual village festival in honour of the main deity in the village is the responsibility of this *tawa guthi*. Such a practice can be seen to prevail at Panga near Kirtipur, as well as in other Newar settlements. An arrangement similar to this one is described by Hiroshi Ishii for the Visnudevi festival of Satungal in Kathmandu (Ishii: 1978). All this seems to suggest a continuation of the same practice more or less from the same *devakula* tradition described earlier. Like the head (*thakali*) of the *tawa guthi*, who has to see to the smallest details of the annual village festival, we see a *Kulapati* described in a Licchavi inscription dated in the time of King Narendradeva, vested with a similar role and responsibility during the worship to Lokapalasvamin of Hamsagrihadranga, (Vajracharya: 1973: 485-89). The expression like *deghuri puja* mentioned in the *Gopalarajavamsavali* (compiled in the late 14th century)<sup>5</sup> around the time of Jayasthiti Malla (c. 1382-95) provides the next important link to the concept of *devakula*. At this time this expression is used in the sense of a 'clan-god' worshipped by large, extended Newar families of the villages or settlements. The etymology of it too must be sought in the word *devakula*<sup>6</sup> itself. It means that the *devakula* gods in the villages had risen to be the clan-gods of these families. So the Licchavi word *devakula* described not only a temple, but laid the basis for the ensuing temple practices and the religious/cultural lifestyle of the people of the Kathmandu Valley. This information is therefore relevant and necessary in any discourse concerned with temple architecture.

Like other expressions for a temple earlier, it must be remembered, however, that *devakula* too was no more than a generic term for it, and referred to no specific architectural type or style, nor anything relating to its



size. From a single instance in an inscription of Amsuvarma of c. 610 from Patan Sundhara we can gather one or two details of a *devakula* temple. For instance, it describes a *Matin devakula* in a ruined state and mentions the work of repair done on it, the relevant line of which reads as follows:

...*mātindevakulamardhavinipatiteṣṭakāpaṅkti vivarapraviṣṭa  
nakulakulākulitamūṣikāsārtha dūravighatita niravaśeṣadvāra  
kapātavātāyanādiṣṭānadā rusaṃghātāṃ yatnataḥ pratisaṃskārya  
tasya dirghatarapaścātkālasausthityanimittam...*(1973:339).

[...the brick walls of the temple of Matin, having half-fallen down, with holes rendered onto them by the scurrying hordes of mongooses and mice, with no traces left of its doorway(s) and window(s), the wood having been old [and rotten], it was repaired with efforts, so that it may continue to exist for a long time to come..." (my English rendering based on Dhanavajra's Nepali translation).]

But this detail tells us little about the exact type or the nature of architecture, nor about the temple size of Matin, except that it was made of bricks, and that it had door(s) or window(s) on it. It makes no other allusion whatsoever either to the type of the roof, nor about its roofing material, nor to the kind of the superstructure the temple had.

All this leads me to postulate that we should not look for large-sized temples with their multiple roofs and built on a series of pedestals in the Licchavi period yet, such as we would find them in the later Malla period commonly. More likely, these early temples had been far simpler in their construction and design, with a raised platform, open sky, or with a metal canopy supported on pillars hung over the main icon, a wall or an enclosure surrounding it, and with a single or several doorways, reached by a flight of steps. Such temples more likely had resembled pavilion-like *mandapas*, rather than resembling proper cellas with a closed *garbhagriha*, or a *sanctum sanctorum*. Open shrines of this type are not purely formed out of our imagination, since one can see several examples of them surviving as relics from the past in the temples of Guhyesvari and Kiratesvara at Pashupati, and in the Bhadrakali temple at Tundikhel, Kathmandu even to this day.

Changu Narayan and Pashupati are among the oldest and the most celebrated temples of Nepal. Kings from the Licchavi period down to the modern times have endowed them with riches and munificent gifts of land. But there is little to suggest that these temples at those sites had been big structures from the earliest times, such as we find them at present. Nor do

the inscriptions of the day talk about any large-sized temples to have stood there.

We should now turn to see what the Pashupati Inscription of Jayadeva II has to say with regard to the Pashupati temple. It is a long and important inscription, and historically very significant, too. It also furnishes a long genealogy of the Licchavi ancestors of King Jayadeva II. The inscription marked the occasion of offering a silver lotus, along with several dedicatory verses in Sanskrit composed in praise of Lord Pashupati, by the king, amidst a great function in the year c. 733. In my view verse no. 25 describes clearly the type of temple that had existed at that time at Pashupati. The verse is quoted in full below:

*Yeṣā bhāti kulācalaiḥ parivṛtā prāleyasamsargibhir /  
vedīmeruśīleva kāñcanamayī devasya viśrāmbhūḥ //*  
*śubhraiḥ prāntavikāśipaṇkajadalairityākalayyasvayaṃ /  
raupyaṃ padmamācīkaratpasupateḥ pūjārthamatyujjvalaṃ //*  
(Vajracharya:1973:551).

[The resting “vedi” (plinth) of the god is like the golden stone of the mount Meru, and the large hills with snow that surround it, do look beautiful on it. In matching fitness [to it], this bright lotus bud of silver, set in the middle of [other] petals around it, was commissioned by the King (Jayadeva) himself in order to offer it to Lord Pashupati (my English rendering based on Dhanavajra’s Nepali translation).]

Dhanavajra has interpreted the words *kulācalaiḥ parivṛtā* to be a metaphor for the hills surrounding the Kathmandu Valley, and *vedīmeruśīlevakāñcanamayī devasya viśrāmbhūḥ*, to be the same for suggesting the Valley, saying that the whole of the Valley had thus been implied as Lord Pashupati’s abode. In my own opinion this is a bit being over-interpretative and a far-fetched translation of the verse. I think we should take the meaning of *kulācalah* and *merusileva* in a more figurative sense, the former being an allusion actually to the wall around the shrine, which was probably made or embossed with silver, and the latter referring to the platform (*vedi*) upon which the icon of Pashupati had stood, as made of or embossed with gilded metal. The next important thing we learn from this verse is the offering of a large silver lotus to Siva by the king, with smaller petals joined around it, offered by other family members. The lotus thus made was to be placed over the head of Pashupati. The relevant line of the inscription reads as follows:

Śrīvatsadevyā nṛpaterjananyā samamsamantātparivārapadmaih /  
 raupyaṃ harasyoparipūṇḍarikāṃ tadādaraiḥ kārītamatyudāraṃ //  
 (Vajracharya: *Ibid*: 552).

It does not become quite clear whether this silver lotus was suspended as a lotus lantern from the ceiling, or it merely looked like a parasol over the *lingam* of Pashupati. In any case, we are justified in deducing from the relevant lines of the inscription above that the shrine of Pashupati at this time had been a more open place. It had stood on a platform, was open to the sky, and had a wall to enclose it. The presence of one or more doorways on this wall can easily be imagined, of course.

Next, we should examine what the other oldest temple, that of Changu Narayana, has to tell us in this regard. King Manadēva I issued his famous Changu Pillar Inscription of c. 464 at this place, in which he has traced his short genealogy and described his military campaigns. Although the erection of the inscribed pillar must have either followed or preceded the worship to Visnu Dolasikharasvamin residing at this shrine, yet we get no clue in the inscription whatsoever to the type of temple--big or small-- existing here. The interior of the shrine-- its *sanctum sanctorum*-- where the main idol of Visnu astride his mount Garūda is kept, consists of an area marked off by four pillars of gilded metal with a canopy hung overhead. This area looks like a separate *mandapa* in the middle of the four walls of the temple. The donor of this *mandapa* was Jayaprakash Malla (Khanal:1983:84), the last Malla king of Kantipur. But what he had done was no more than merely to renovate an older *mandapa* in that place and replace it by a new one in the same form. The present temple of Changu Narayan has completely enveloped or entombed this *mandapa* inside its walls now. I am of the opinion that the area occupied by this *mandapa* is what had constituted the original temple of Changu Narayan. I would think or rather like to deduce that this temple too had been made in the form of an open *mandapa* standing in the middle of a large precinct. Khanal reports about two large, beautiful, over six-foot tall, pillars of gilded metal with carvings of lovely figures on them, now kept in the temple store, away from the public view, which he stylistically dates around the seventh century (Khanal: *Ibid*: pls.13-14). Stone pillars of early date abandoned from their original place are reported from different parts of the Kathmandu Valley which compel us to think about their possible use and press our argument further<sup>7</sup>. In essence, the evidence of the pillars at Changu and from other parts of the Valley, as well as the mini-shrines of stone dedicated to Siva, which are also a common sight in the Valley everywhere<sup>8</sup>, strongly suggest that early temples had been more open in form. The Pashupati temple also, on close inspection,

reveals the use of the same technique of construction by enveloping. The sanctum where the main *lingam* is housed consists of a separate inner chamber with the temple walls around it built at a later time. This inner chamber has a ceiling that is covered with silver sheets.

This kind of temple building by enveloping can be seen used in the case of several other leading temples of the Kathmandu Valley as well. Such temples came to be called the *tawa devala* (Vajracharya: 1975: 72). The big temple of Taleju, Degu Taleju and Jagannath in the Hanumandhoka palace area, all are built in this style. In all these cases, one may well be allowed to assume that they had more modest looks of an open shrine, standing at those spots originally<sup>9</sup>, and larger temples around them came to be built by donors only later on.

Early shrines thus were more open and built less like enclosed cellas. A hint of this nature may be gathered by looking at the many shrines built to Ganesa, the Matrika goddesses, and to Durga in the Kathmandu Valley also. Although such temples today may be boasting of their tiered roofs arranged in several storeys, they betray signs of their being more open at an earlier date. These shrines had probably consisted of nothing more than just a wall to the back, with the icon attached to it. Or, alternately, they were put into a hole dug in the ground, with a few plain stones inside represented as icons. The latter types are more usual to and found in the case of the shrines belonging to the Matrika goddesses.<sup>10</sup> The actual shrine area had probably been no more elaborate than this. But wealthy donors of the later days driven by their new found religious zeal commissioned elaborate temples with multiple roofs to be erected over them. We can still recognise the back wall wherein the icon of the deity remains affixed as the important original part of these shrines. The three other sides enclosing the temple are usually supported on wooden pillars and screened by flimsy lattices in lieu of walls, and a doorway in front. The shrines of the Matrikas, as already said, are usually made in a hole into the ground.<sup>11</sup> Their shrines too had walls and roofs put up over them later on. The deities in them are always represented by aniconic stones and not by any anthropomorphic images.<sup>12</sup>

The gist of the discussion so far does not lie in denying the existence of temples -- even roofed temples -- altogether in the early period. Temples probably had single roofs made in the familiar hipped style over the cellas. The cellas were far from assuming their multi-tiered shapes of the later date. Alternately, shrines could have consisted of only shallow niches flanked by carved pilasters and a *torana*, with a *kirtimukha* arched over them. We see relief carvings of such shrines appearing on sculptures and votive chaityas made of stone. Another type of roof over these shrines could have been made with a low roof consisting of a few receding steps of stone just

enough to close the opening of the wall overhead. In any case, the early temples of the Kathmandu Valley were far from assuming their full stature and grandeur of a later date, whether in their multi-roofed forms or in their *sikhara* variety.

The accounts of the Chinese envoy to Nepal, Wang Hsien-ts'ang, who was the head of the second and third Chinese missions to visit the courts of King Narendradeva (c. 643-679) between c. 643 and c. 657, preserved in the T'ang Annals, contain some curious passages relating, among other things, to the description of temples in the Kathmandu Valley of that time. In one place the envoy describes the temple or temples to lie "10 li to the south of the capital." In another instance, a structure of 'seven stories in the middle of the king's palace' is described (Levi 1905, I: 155-59; Slusser 1982, I: 162, 164; Regmi 1960: 175-77). Both these accounts apparently seem to run counter to our postulation above and a little hard to reconcile with our contention regarding the early forms of the temples. Most scholars writing on the multiple-roofed temples of Nepal have been heavily influenced in their thinking by the evidence furnished by these Chinese accounts. In one description, Wang Hsien-ts'ang writes:

To the south of the town, about 10 li away, is found an isolated hill covered with an extraordinary vegetation; the temples there are in many storeys that one would take for the crown of clouds... (Levi 1905, I: 58-59).

The next description of a structure in the capital goes like this:

In the capital of Nepal there is a structure which is more than 200 tch'eu tall and 80 pou (400 paces) in circumference. 10,000 men can find accommodation in it. It is divided in three terraces, each terrace divided into seven storeys. In the four pavilions, there are sculptures to marvel at. Precious stones and pearls decorate them. (Levi 1905, I: 159).

The above narration by the Chinese envoy cannot all be taken in its face value. Some of them surely read as fanciful and hyperbolic descriptions. Slusser has hinted at the possibility of exaggerations and discrepancies creeping in renderings of Wang Hsien-ts'ang's accounts at various hands (Slusser 1982, I: 162, 164). If storied temples were so common already, why did the Chinese have to go 10 li outside the town to see them on a hill? In my own view, what he actually saw must have been a different kind of structure built on a hillside which he thought was a temple. His description

of the shape and sheer dimensions of the other structure in the capital is not easy to comprehend either. No such construction, or anything even remotely resembling it, has ever been known to exist in the building tradition of the Kathmandu Valley, then or now. What sort of a building it must have been which could accommodate as many as 10,000 people in it? It defies all our imagination. Slusser has published another version of the same passage, translated a little differently. It reads:

In the middle of the palace there is a tower with copper tiles.

Its balustrades, grilles, columns, beams, and everything therein are set with gems and semiprecious stones. At each of the four corners of the tower there descends a copper water-pipe, at the base of which the water is spouted forth by golden dragons. From the summit of the tower water is poured into troughs [which issuing at length] from the mouths of dragons, gushes forth like a fountain." (1982, I:162).

What this implies has been worded by Levi himself: "After returning to his country, Wang Hiuen-ts'e published the memoirs of his journey around c. 665, which unfortunately has been lost. The rare passages many of which are preserved in quotations trace the wonders of [the travels in] Nepal and show with what attention the ambassador had visited the country." (1905, I:157). Slusser says that Wang Hiuen ts'e's passages are variously rendered at the hands of different translators. (Slusser 1982, I:164). In the background of this, placing too much reliance on the accounts of the Chinese, or on the accuracy of his details, may not be too helpful for our purpose, and should therefore be taken with caution.

Regardless of the Chinese testimony, a later date for the fully formed multi-roofed temples is cogent and must be adhered to. There is no precise date as to when these temples first began to be constructed. We can only draw inferences and make some approximations on the basis of some indirect and circumstantial references to them in the historical records in this connection. Going by them, a later origin theory still looks more plausible and consistent. No records earlier than the 11th century speak of the existence of large-sized temples in the Kathmandu Valley. The *Gopalarajavamsavali* gives accounts of some temples for the first time, furnishing some useful details, starting only from the 11th century<sup>13</sup>. According to it, King Sankaradeva (c.1069-1082), for example, built a temple to Samkaresvara at Nandisala (modern Naxal) and had a copper roof donated to it (folio 24a); King Sivadeva (c.1098-1126) donated a golden roof

to Pashupati temple (folio 24a); King Anandadeva (c.1147-1167) donated a copper roof to the Sivagla temple (folio 25a); King Somesaradeva (c.1178-1183) built a 'big temple at Yodyam and had it decorated with lovely wood carvings' (folio 25a); King Jayabhimadeva (c.1258-1271) donated a copper roof to the Changu Narayana (folio 26a); Princess Viramadevi donated a roof to the Indrakuta temple (Panauti Indresvara temple) in NS 414(c.1294), and her son Jayasaktideva (c. 1276-1315) donated a *dhvaja* to it (folio 26b-27a); and King Anantamalladeva (c.1274-1308) offered a golden roof, four golden horses at four corners, and a *dhvaja* to Pashupati temple (folio 27a). Inscriptional evidence to temple construction activity becomes more and more abundant and overwhelming, later on.<sup>14</sup>

The evidence gathered from the various texts relating to the building science (*vastusastra*) also seems to suggest a mediaeval date for the multi-roofed temples in the Kathmandu Valley. Slusser refers to a celebrated text of the *Kriyasamgraha-Pamjika* which, according to her, was in use in India around the 11th century. This text is mentioned in an inscription of NS 713 (c.1593) (Regmi 1966,IV:40) at Pimche-bahal in Kathmandu Wotu, in which it is said that this Buddhist *vihara* (Newari, *bahal*) at Pimche was built in accordance with the principles laid down in this treatise (Slusser 1982 I,130).<sup>15</sup> A copy of this work is also kept in the National Archives in Kathmandu. Slusser also mentions the names of half a dozen other texts, all relating to buildings and its rituals (*Ibid*, f.n. 11), kept in the same Archives. Manavajra mentions about two other texts of this nature, viz., *Vastujyotisam* and *Netrajnanarnava* (Vajracharya 1970:242). From all this the burden of evidence seems weighted heavily in favour of a mediaeval date for the construction of these temples.

In the view of some scholars, none of the extant multi-roofed temples are actually older than the 14th century,<sup>16</sup> while according to some others, they are even later in date, starting only from the 15th century. Some of the temples cited earlier by us had been made no doubt much before this late date. But, even in their case, they could have been rebuilt or renovated several times in the later centuries, since their first construction.

We should now proceed to give some details of these multi-roofed or multi-tiered temples of the Kathmandu Valley, and the form and shape in which we find them today. Generally, multi-roofed temples are made on a square plan,<sup>17</sup> although quite a number of them are also made on a rectangular plan. These latter kinds are dedicated invariably either to the god Bhairava or to Bhimasena. Occasionally, temples are also made on an octagonal plan, in which case they are invariably dedicated to god Krishna.<sup>18</sup> It is, however, the temples on square plans that are made in the highest number and may probably constitute their basic standard forms.<sup>19</sup> This can



be surmised further from their pedestals at their base, also on square plan, upon which they stand, giving them their full height and their imposing appearance.<sup>20</sup> Pedestals are usual only in the case of square and not rectangular temples. On plan, the pedestals would appear like a series of concentric squares on the outer edge, with the *sanctum sanctorum*, that is, the chamber wherein the main idol of the deity is kept, forming its innermost core at the centre. Slusser writes:

...Square temple is a *mandala* in which the deity, "the Sovereign of the *Mandala* occupies the innermost mansion (*kutagara*), the centre of the sanctum (1982,I:142).

The temple is made up of three main parts or components (i) the plinth (s), (ii) the sanctum, and (iii) the superstructure. The sanctum or the cella, containing the idol of the principal deity, is naturally the temple's most critical and significant element. The two other components of it are only subsidiary, and help to enhance the architectural grandeur of the temple. The cella can contain anything inside as an icon, ranging from a stone image in an anthropomorphic form of the deity, to a phallic, a waterhole capped by a *kalasa* (water pot), a *purnakalasa* ("vase with foliage"), or just plain boulders, all worshipped as the representation of the deity. The temple building itself is no less aesthetically treated, covering it profusely with wood-carvings. Close to the temple are made other accessories in the surroundings. Wood-carving on it is done concentrating mainly on the pillars, doorways, windows, *toranas*, cornices and the struts. At the base of the temple is the *sanctum sanctorum* (*garbhagriha*), enclosed by a wall with one or several doorways on it. Outside the sanctum wall, the temple sometimes can have around it a running colonnade, providing a passage for circumambulation. The temple doorway is gained by a flight of steps cutting right across the middle of the pedestals, which is generally guarded by a pair of winged lions. The sanctum doorway consists of a single frame or a triple-frame opening, made on one or all four sides of the sanctum. The wood-carvings, for which these temples are so well-known, are found concentrating on the upper halves of the pillars, the lintels and jambs, the doorways and windows, the *torana*, cornices, and their struts. Such carvings consist of vegetal, floral and arabesque motifs, of human and animal figures, or have designs of other symbolic and auspicious significance, such as the *astamangalas* (the eight auspicious signs) (Deo 1968-69) common to both Hinduism and Vajrayana Buddhism. The struts are the most singular features of these multi-storied, multi-roofed temples, endowing them with their distinct personality. The strut carvings of female figures standing under the

bough of leaves seem to be inspired by and derived from the *salabhanjika* motif (adapted from the standing figure of a female holding onto the branch of a tree, reminiscent of Maya Devi, giving birth to the child Buddha at Lumbini gardens), originally. They have, however, been modified and elaborated since to include figures of the other divine or semi-divine beings pertaining to the family of the deity represented inside the temple (*parivara devatas*). The four corner struts, however, depart from this general rule and display on them carvings of identical, horse-like, but winged animals (*sardulas* or *sarabhas*), exuding a great deal of physical power and strength in their leaping postures. Arched over the lintel of the doorway is a semi-circular piece of wood which carries the distinct motif of the *Kirtimukha* or the "face of glory."<sup>21</sup> At the centre of it, the *torana* carries a small figure of the deity represented inside. On the Indian temples, such a figure appears on the lintel head. A pair of *makara* heads are fashioned on two ends of the *torana* at the bottom.

As the Gupta imprint on the sculptural art of Nepal is so unmistakable, similarly, the many architectural features, motifs and decorations on its temples have not remained untouched by its influence. The ubiquitous motif of the *purnakalasa* to be found on all pillar carvings is proof enough to cite in support of this fact. This motif appears on the Nepali pillars towards the base, and not near their capitals. On the "*purnakalasa*" motif, Percy Brown writes in this way:

For the Gupta capital is the *purna kalasa*, "the bowl of plenty", typifying a renewed faith in water nourishing plant life trailing from its brim, an allegory which has produced the "vase and flower" motif (1959:48).

In the same way, the arrangement of gradually recessing the jambs of the doorway(s) into its opening follows much in the manner of the Gupta temples, such as in the Deogarh temple of India. Door-jambs are also done like a bunch of small pilasters piled together. The cornice which goes round along the upper side of the sanctum wall, among other things, is made up of square-headed indentations, shaped as a row of animal heads (Sanskrit: *dharanika*; Newari: *dhalinkhwa*). This design probably originally derives from the projecting ends of rafters which were laid to support the floor of the upper storey of the temple. This feature too is a strong reminder of the Gupta legacy. In certain respects, these multi-storied temples today seem to copy forms of their wooden prototypes in bricks and terracotta. The example of it is forthcoming from the design of intersecting beams; now, in a stylised form, jutting out like protrusions from, the corners of the temple

wall over the cornice band. This element on the wall helps to form a broad band and to act as a base to rest for the slanting struts.

The sanctum wall from the base is vertically taken all the way up to the last storey of the temple, serving it like a central axis. As it rises up, this wall in each storey is made setting it slightly back from the one below it, the gap created thus being filled in by a device of horizontal rafters and mud. The roofs made of tiles, or of gilded metal sheets, are sloped down from here, tying one of their ends to the wall, and the other end hanging out, thus providing a good shed to the wall from the sun and rain. The setting back of the wall helped to reduce the size of the temple above and narrow its upper storeys in proportion. The multiple roofs are purely a matter of style, and serve no utilitarian purpose of real storeys. In instances where the upper floors are known to be in use, they have either a running balustrade around, or are screened with tall, full-sized lattices of wood in between the space of the struts. At Pashupatinath temple, the upper floor above the sanctum provides one such instance kept in active use of it in the form of a store or strong-room of the temple for safe-keeping of valuables made as offerings to the god, such as coins and precious metals. Such an arrangement can be seen to prevail in a number of other temples as well.

Finally, the temple terminates in a finial of metal (*gajura*). Manavajra in this regard writes:

The construction of a *gajura* looks like a neck. It is framed within an artistic metal triangle, over which is placed a parasol, kissing the sky (1970:252).

The neck mentioned by Manavajra is in the shape of an inverted bell. The finial is accompanied by one or two other elements additionally, such as a single or a double decked, fluted ringstone, called the *amalaka*, a waterpot (*kalasa*), an oval shaped lid over the waterpot (*manipuraka*), and an umbrella (*chhatra*). The mounting of the *kalasa* and the *chhatra* on the finial, and the suspension of a metal strip, called the *dhvaja* (banner), down from it to the level of the main temple doorway, has been among the crucial parts of the temple consecration rites:

To Kramrisch the tall towers of these temples along with their finials are of a high symbolic meaning. She writes:

The upward journey approaches its end the nearer it leads to the Central Pillar of the temple which emerges from the High *Vedi*, a straight passage in its vertical direction though not factually, right from the *garbhagriha* to its centre. Above the

crown and ring of the *Amalaka* there is no competition; only a meeting and concurrence from all directions in the point of the finial; it rises bud-shaped or in the likeness of a fruit (*matulunga*) from the vessel, the *Amrita* – *Kalasa* (*amarakaraka*) which makes immortal because “Visvakarma made the *Kalasa* from the different parts (*kala*) of each of the gods... So the substance of the *Kalasa*, which is gold, as a rule, contains the properties of each of the gods up in the deathless region, straight above the *Nidhi-Kalasa* in the foundation of the temple in which were placed the treasures (*nidhi*) of the earth... The finial (*Stupika*) with its point (*bindu*) above the *Kalasa*, above the *Amalaka* rises from the centre of the Central Shaft (*venu*)... This is the original function of the *Amalaka* as ring-stone or naturally holed stone, *Svayamatrinna*, the self-perforated “brick” (*istaka*) in the Vedic Agni... (1976,2:349-50).

Having described the principal features of these temples, we have to note, however, that there is no unanimity of opinion among scholars regarding the name by which they must be called. The early European writers popularized them with the name of ‘pagoda’, which to me is both inappropriate and misleading. Misleading because the “pagoda” name describes towers of all sorts, shapes and characters found in different and far-flung countries. Slusser prefers to call them as ‘Newar style’ (Slusser 1982), Bernier, as “Nepal Pagoda” (Bernier 1971), and Hutt as “Newar Pagoda” (Hutt 1994). In all cases, however, these terms are coined by the individual scholars, and, are, by no means, terms that local people have been calling them by either in the past or now. As far back as 1968, I suggested that these temples should be called “multi-storied” or “multi-roofed” temples (Sharma 1968:91), because local people during the Malla times have always called them by this term in Newari. The name “Nya-tapola” literally means nothing but a temple in “five-storeys” in this language. Terms like “Na-tapola” and “Swa-tapola” are also in use in the late mediaeval inscriptions. Two such inscriptions are from Lalitpur, dated in NS 761 (Vajracharya 1999:81,85) There are other terms of a similar purport, like “ni-taja” or “swa-taja”, which also were in currency at this time. It would be erroneous, therefore, to use alien terms sounding incongruous to refer to them in their place.

Prominent and celebrated temples were not made as single and isolated structures. They were laid out in the middle of an open space or a spacious precincts, with or without a compound wall around, and, more often than

not, were dotted with a number of other temple accessories nearby. Among these, a *hiti* or a stone-fountain, a *jarhun* or a water-receptacle, a *pukhu* or a water-tank, useful for the purpose of ritual cleansing and for offering ablutions by the temple visitors are a common sight. Large gongs suspended from the twin-pillars which were sounded during the time of *puja* (worship) inside the temple are other such accessories. The architecture of the temple building and its surroundings were determined by the mode of their use on the part of the visitors. A large congregation or assembly of people was not a customary mode of worship in the Kathmandu Valley. People took their *puja* (worship) items (usually by women) in a tray from individual homes, and after offering them to the deity at the temple, they returned home. All they did at the shrine after the *puja* was to go round it once, twice or three times in circumambulation, for which the passage around the colonnade of the temple was used, or in the absence of it, was performed from the topmost pedestal. It is natural, therefore, that these temples should never come to have the parallels of the *sabha*, *bhoga* or *nritya mandapas* of the Indian temples, attached to them. In their place, other structures were considered far more essential to have and were built as accessories around them in their vicinity. These were the *patis*, the *phalincha* or the *sattal*, made just singly or in a cluster around them. It is in these *patis* or *sattals* that the visiting devotees rested awhile after their journey, laid out and arranged their *puja* items, and when the *puja* was over, sat down to eat their little snacks. Or, the *patis* were used as places for singing devotional hymns to the deity, mornings and evenings. The *patis* were also much used buildings during the time of the annual festival in honour of the deity in the temple (Sanskrit, *varsabandhana*; Newari, *bunsadhan*).

The possible source for the origin of the multiple roofs of these temples is a matter of speculation. The closest resemblance to this multiple-roof-idea derives from the shape of the ceremonial umbrella (*chhatra*)<sup>22</sup>. The slanted struts (*tunals*) supporting the roofs of these temples veritably resemble the braces of an umbrella. The nearest source of origin for these roofs should lie most probably in the several-tiered ringed parasols of wood (*chhatravali*), sticking out from the top of the Buddhist stupa or chaitya in the Kathmandu Valley, before their tapering spindle-shaped tower in thirteen stages or steps in the present times, came to replace them.

A parallel class of temples was also built in the Kathmandu Valley alongside the multi-roofed variety that in date was coeval with them. These temples have been locally known as the *granthakuta* temples<sup>23</sup> or *ratna devala*, the latter name possibly deriving from the shape of their tower, visualized in the oval shape of a gem (*ratna*)<sup>24</sup>. In the mediaeval writings, such temples in North India are commonly known by the name of *Sikhara*.

Their distinctive feature in Nepal lies in their tapering tower, soaring high over the sanctum, and a porch in front, supported on pillars. These temples are usually made of stone, and, hence, they are also called "*lhon degah*" or "stone temple", locally. Their best example is furnished, no doubt, by the Patan Mangal Bazar Krishna Mandir built by King Siddhinarasimha Malla in c. 1637 (Vajracharya: 1999:74-78). This temple, however, has a running colonnade at its base, instead of a porch. Obviously, some elements from the other architectural style have been incorporated into it to give it a singular appearance. Regardless of the antiquity of these temples, the artisans and builders do not, however, seem to be too much at home or homogenized to deal with the stone used in the *lhon degahs* of the Kathmandu Valley, with the sole exception, which is that of the Patan Krishna Mandir.

I do not wish to describe these temples at a greater length here. However, before ending, I must not omit to make a brief mention of a stone temple standing in the precincts of the Pashupati temple in its south-west corner, which may actually be the earliest standing specimen of this kind of temple made in the North Indian *Sikhara* style found here. Judging from the artistic style of sculptures carved on its walls, the temple seems to be made around the 11th century. No other temple of this kind is reported from elsewhere in the Kathmandu Valley. The temple houses a small *sivalingam* of stone inside, but its lintel displays unusually an image of a four-armed seated Brahma (From top right hand, clockwise, he holds a rosary, a book, a water-pot and hand in a boon gesture). It faithfully replicates on a mini-scale the chief elements of temples made in the North Indian *Sikhara* style. It is a small, almost toy-sized temple, but in most other respects, it is complete with the standard features of a North-Indian temple. The temple measures<sup>25</sup> no taller than 12' in height and 9' in length. The rectangular portico measures 4'7" north-south and 2'7" east-west, and is just 4' tall. Similarly, the sanctum doorway is only 3' tall, and the sanctum itself has barely enough room to stand for two persons inside.

It has a moulded base, a middle wall (*jamgha*) above, broken in shallow folds of a *saptaratha* design, and its surface sculpted with figures. These consist of the eight guardian divinities (the *astadikpalas*) carved around the temple, and images of Lakulisa, Siva Nataraja and Ardhanarisvara placed in niches on its southern, western, and northern faces, respectively. Overhead, the niches are decorated with mini-chaitya windows as in the Buddhist rock-cut caves, which we find nowhere else in the whole of the Kathmandu Valley. The middle-wall in its upper reaches carries a frieze of *gandharva* couples, carrying garlands of flowers or trays in their hands. The temple in front (east side) is complete with a pillared porch. The pillars are fluted in

the middle and carved in multiple designs of which the prominent motif consists of the "vase and foliage". The capital of the pillars is made up of double brackets. The temple doorway is guarded by two four-armed standing images of Siva's look-alikes ( Virabhadra ?), and flanked further by images of Ganga and Yamuna. The upper reaches of the jamgha serves as the base of the roof or of the temple superstructure above. There is a further decorative panel, consisting of diapers, *astamangalas* and disfigured dwarfs up here. The three niches here are occupied by figures of Surya, Ganesa and Visnu on its southern, western and northern face, respectively. The roof at present is made up of a low, convex dome of stone and a finial of sorts, which, undoubtedly, is a later implantation. It is hard to guess now what sort of a superstructure or tower the temple originally might have carried, if it ever did. Most probably, it had been a low roof from the very beginning, consisting of no more than a few ascending steps of stones, enough to close in the gap of the roof above.

### Notes

1. This article is dedicated to the memory of my revered Guru Sri Gokul Chandra Shastri, who was my teacher at Tri-Chandra College between 1953 and 1957. I gratefully recall here the kindness and affection with which he treated me even in personal life.
2. Banerjee traces the origin of the Nepali temples to the multi-terraced "eduka" style constructions in India (Banerjee:1980:107 ff.). But the eduka basically is a sepulchral monument, the walls of which have bones of the dead buried in them. The Nepali temples do not even remotely concern such practices, nor can be linked to it. Hence, this idea should be outright rejected.
3. Mary Slusser talks about the remarkable continuity in the diverse location and modes of shrines in the Kathmandu Valley even today. She writes: "Gods and goddesses... may be worshipped ... in various places – in the home, the village, and the town, at the crossroads, by the wayside, at the riverbank or pond-side, in a secluded forest, an open field, a cave or on a hill. In all these places there may be no permanent dwelling for the gods, simply an unprotected image or symbol, a mandala for temporary invocation, or a hypaethral shrine." (Slusser 1982 I:128).
4. According to *Amarakosa*, this word describes a person who works as a paid priest in a temple (*Amarakosa*. Kanda II, Sudra Varga, verse 11). Kula Chandra Sharma Gautam (ed.) *Amarakosa*, Royal Nepal Academy, 1969. The Newari term *dyahla*, meaning a temple custodian, probably

derives from it. Such a person is appointed from a low, sweeper's caste of Poda.

5. Dhanavajra Vajracharya and Kamal P. Malla(ed.). *The Gopalarajavamsavali*. Wiesbaden GMBH. 1985, pp. 37, 69.
6. The vital link between *deghuri puja*, or its spelling variants, such as *degudi* and *deghudi*, or the modern *digu puja*, and our much familiar *devakula*, is provided by *devakulika*, a word that finds an entry in the *Dictionary of Indo-Aryan Languages* by R.L. Turner. He gives its meaning to be a 'mini-temple' (See Ralph L. Turner. *A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages*. London, Oxford University Press. 1966, 373). The *devakulika* type of 'mini-temples' were made in Nepal Valley and have survived in the form of small, portable shrines carried in baskets suspended from the carrier's shoulders during the *digu puja* month (s) of April-May in the Kathmandu Valley.
7. Many broken and mutilated, beautifully carved pillars of stone, lying isolated and removed from their original context, and believed to be of the Licchavi period, can be seen in the Kathmandu Valley everywhere. One regular and prominent motif on them is that of the *Purna kalasa*, or the "vase and foliage". Slusser has illustrated several examples of these Pillars ( Slusser: 1982 II: pls. 289-0; 300, 302 and 310). I would like to think that all these pillars had once formed part of the simpler, pillar-borne open shrines of the Licchavi period.
8. It may be well to keep in mind the shape and style of the mini-shrines of stone, housing *sivalingams* in them, found from all over the Kathmandu Valley. The *sivalingams* are installed on a plinth, with a roof of a heavy coping stone, held on by four stone pillars. Their shape reminds us of dolmens. Some of these shrines can be seen standing right in the precincts of the Pashupati temple. Slusser has reported some others from Lele, Deopatan and Banepa (Slusser: 1982, II: pls. 246-47; 251-52). These mini-shrines too could have been made corresponding to the form and style, particularly, those of early Siva temples, in the Kathmandu Valley.
9. The Indresvar temple of Panauti and the Patan Charnarayan temple are also built in the *tawa-devala* style.
10. The Matrika goddesses are mentioned from the Licchavi period itself (Vajracharya:1973: Insc. no.53). They attain immense popularity, however, only in the later mediaeval times. The Saptamatrikas, or the seven members of them to start with, have an eighth member added in Nepal at this time in the form of Mahalaksmi, after which they begin to be called the Astamatrikas. This eighth member was conceived in the form of the goddess Durga or Mahisamardini, i.e., the killer of the



buffalo demon. Under the new impact of the Sakta cult, the worship to the family of the eight goddesses, or the Astamatrikas, with their various names and forms, assumes much popularity. The Sakta and the Tantric cults shared not only a common mode of worship between them, they also made use of many common ritual items and ingredients. Both relied on a wide use of *mudra* (hand gestures), *mandala* (diagrams), *mamsa* (animal flesh) and *madya* (liqueur) during rituals. The Buddhist Tantric Vajrayana which was in its peak at this time introduced many female divinities, such as Vajrayogini, Nairatma, Tara, Hariti, Dharanis and so forth. The shrines of the female deities pertaining to either of these sects were worshipped alike by followers of both the sects without making much distinction. Popularly, Chamunda, a member of the Astamatrikas, was nicknamed *Ajima*, which means "grandmother". These goddesses were also regarded as divine protectors of towns and villages. The three towns of the Kathmandu Valley are encircled by a ring of their shrines.

11. It may be possible to speculate a little on why the temples of the Astamatrikas are usually made in a hole dug into the ground. Mother goddesses have been regarded as potent symbols of fecundity or fertility from the very beginning. This fertility idea perhaps linked them closely to the earth, the primary source of all plenty and productivity. It is therefore likely that their shrines are dug into the very womb of the earth. The Licchavi inscription mentioned above (f.n. 10) makes a curious reference to the idols of Matrikas made of earth, which having been ruined over time, were replaced with their stone counterparts by the donor. From this one can probably read a closer relationship of the Matrikas to the earth or the soil. Further, iconic representations of Matrika goddesses on stone are depicted in a heavy, buxom and earthy style reminiscent of the early Indian Yaksis, the divines of trees and vegetation.
12. In a singular development of temple ritual practices and related services, not unconnected with the earlier *devakula* tradition, there were built a class of religious buildings, whose function was complementary to the main temple. These are the *dya chhen*. This latter class of building is built separately and located at some distance from the temple itself in an area (s) lived in by most of its *guthiyars*, that is, its temple caretakers. It is in this house that all ritual accoutrements of the temple needed at the time of the annual or twelve-yearly festival of the deity or deities are actually kept. A metal image of the main deity in its full anthropomorphic representation is kept in this house or in the house of the *thakali*. This is brought out, put on a chariot (occasionally, hand-

- carried), and taken round for worship by each individual house and by residents of the locality amidst a big fanfare, during the course of the festival.
13. According to Banerjee the earliest evidence to the existence of the multiple roofed temples comes from a painting of a ms. of the *Sivadharm Purana* of the 11th century (Banerjee:1980: 82).
  14. The Patan Kumbhesvara inscription of NS 512 (c.1392) describes the Siva temple in these words: "...a lovely temple was made with a *torana*; the ground of the temple was purified and encircled by a wall; it has four golden doorways set with gems..." This type of description of a Siva temple still echoes the early Licchavi style Siva temples, including that of Pashupati.
  15. *Evam vihāra samsthāpitārtham prathamataram bhūparīkṣā, krodhāgnipūjā, kumārī arcanā, mārīci rakṣā, salya parīkṣā, bhūmiyācanā, ekāsītikoṣṭhāstha devatāpūjā, yavakaropanam, jāngulīpūjā, kalaśādhivāsana, kilakālopanam, sutrapātana, vāstuparīkṣā, sandhiparīkṣā, bhūmikhanda, pādasthāpanaparyantānām yathā kryāsamgrahaśāstrokta karmaparipātena prthak prthak pūjāhomādikam krtvā asminjāmbānandavanvihāram pādasamsthāpitam bhavatuḥ tadanantaram vanayā trādvārasthāpanam stambhasthāpanam gavākṣasthāpanam śīrodārusthāpanam paryantānām yathāvidhivat karmaṃkrtvā varsaikena sampūrṇam bhavatu/*
  16. Banerjee thinks that the oldest extant temple made in this style today is the temple of Patan Kumbhesvara of NS 512 (c. 1392).
  17. There is a temple whose plan looks unique. The Jayavagisvari temple at Deopatan, Kathmandu has transepts jutting out on the sides, giving it a cruciform plan. No other temple is known to use such a plan in its construction. Mention may also be made here of the plan of the Dattatreya temple of Bhaktapur, which is big and square in shape. But, curiously, it has a porch-like separate structure in double-stories used as an entrance and added in front, rare to see otherwise in this class of temples.
  18. The reason for it may lie in the life-story of Krishna which makes much significance out of the number eight. Krishna was the eighth child to be born to Devaki, and it was her eighth child who was prophesied to kill Kamsa, the demon.
  19. The measurements of some of the prominent temples made on square plans are: Nya-tapola, 27'6"; Panauti Indresvar, 30'; and Changu Narayan, 32'. Some of the larger constructions in this style are the Kasthamandapa, with 64' square and Degu Taleju with 93' square (Slusser: 1982; Tiwari: 1988; Vajracharya:1975).

20. The plinths or pedestals upon which these temples stand are also made on square plans which are broader in area than the plan of the cella. Their numbers can range from a single pedestal to as many as 9 sometimes. The personality that a pedestal bestows upon a temple can be immediately seen from two examples of the five-storied temples, one, in the case of the *Nya-tapola* at Bhaktapur, and the other, in the case of the *Kumbhesvar* temple at Patan. The *Nya-tapola* looks far more impressive and elegant in comparison. The pedestals of Maju deval and Kathmandu Taleju, nine in number each, present also the highest known number of pedestals so far, three times the number of their roofs.
21. Zimmer introduces the *Kirtimukha* as "a special emblem of Siva himself... then the 'face' began to be used indiscriminately on various parts of Hindu shrines as an auspicious device to ward off evil... with repetition, *Kirtimukha* became conventionalized and presently was combined with a pair of sea monsters (*makara*) that commonly serve the same function as himself...*Kirtimukha* serves primarily as an apotropaic demon-mask, a gruesome, awe-inspiring guardian of the threshold (Zimmer:1972;182).
22. Two temples with their circular towers and roofs, one, the temple of the Kotilingesvar at Pashupati, and the other, that of the Panchamukhi Hanuman at Hanumandhoka palace, are called the "*swata chhatra*" temples (Vajracharya:1975:97), directly drawing on the analogy of the umbrella with which they show a resemblance.
23. This name is also used to describe the mini forms of these temples mounted as finials over some multi-roofed temples.
24. Apart from the stone, these temples were also built of bricks and stucco. Slusser thinks that this term referred particularly to these temples made out of bricks. The term "ratna" or "gem", according to her, described the turrets or mini-towers that were shown clasping around the central tower (Slusser:1982,I:148).
25. Measurements given here are only approximate. The security guards of the Pashupati temple do not normally permit measurements of objects in its yard to be taken. So I had to make the best of the situation by doing it hurriedly, unnoticed and on the sly.

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# LEGISLATIVE ELITE AND THE NEPALESE PARLIAMENT: A STUDY OF THEIR CLASS CHARACTERISTICS<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Be it a developed or a developing nation, the concept of elite has most frequently been invoked in explaining the problems and prospects of social change. Nevertheless, in the Third World social system, such a tendency is more apparent as the social order usually, in these areas, is a function of the political leadership or elite dynamics. There are differences of opinion among social scientists with regard to the definition of term *elite*. I have here, therefore, as it would be relevant, tried to explain about the term elite, just prior to embarking on the class characteristics of the national legislative elite of the Himalaya Kingdom of Nepal.

**Elite and Society:** In fact, the term elite is of the French origin and is derived from the Latin word *eligere*, which etymologically implies to elect or to choose (Kerstiens 1966:4). The very word has been subject to diverse use from the earliest days in the military terminology in the sense of a choice of persons *homes d' elite* and *compagnie d' elite*, to Froissart's 15th century term *-meilleurs des meilleurs*, the best of the best. It was also applied in the 17th century, to recite the characteristics of the commodities of the excellent qualities. The term later came to refer to the prestigious and superior social groups such as the crack military units of the higher ranks and nobility. The term elite had not been in vogue in socio-political writings until the Italian Sociologist Vilfredo Pareto wrote a book the *Trattato di Sociologia Generale* in which he discussed the term with academic excellence. The same book later was translated into English as *The Mind and Society*, which helped bring about a shift of the elite term from choice and election to eminence. Pareto (Pareto 1935:1422-12), for whom elite and class are synonymous, writes:

Let us assume that in every branch of human activity, each individual is given an index that stands as a sign of his capacity, very much the way grades are given in various subjects in examinations in school... And so on for all the branches of human activity. ...So let us make a class of the people who have highest indices in their branch of activity and to that class give the name of elite.

Pareto, in fact, was of the firm view that individuals living in society are not equal intellectually and also morally. Therefore, he preferred to call *elite* to those who are the most competent and effective social groups under a socio-economic and political system. In his writing, *elite* as a notion, is devoid of any intent implying respect or honorific connotations. He argued that people who possess superiority in intelligence, character, skill, power, etc. are only regarded as the elites (Zeitlin 1909:187). According to him, all successful professors, businessmen, politicians, artists and so on are the elites.

There is almost a consensus among social scientists that the term 'elite' is not categorically applied to only one or two people but always to a plurality: a collectivity of some kind inside a society. The idea of high status and superiority is always linked with the term. Elite members do often feel having a high status and in some way superior as a model and standard setters to the society's institutional culture. He further says, *the elite group possesses power, respect, wealth and skill in combination or singly* (Lasswell 1965:21). Gaetano Mosca (1939:50). defined the elite in terms of a social class believing that behind the facades of state government, the power is always limited to the governing few. According to him:

In all societies... two classes of people appear -a class that rules and a class that is ruled. The first class, always the least numerous, performs all political functions, monopolises power and enjoys the advantages that the power brings, whereas the second, the more numerous class is directed and controlled by the first in a manner that is how more or less legal, how more or less arbitrary and violent, and supplies the first in appearance at least with material means of subsistence and with the instrumentalities that are essential to the vitality of the political organism.

A cohesive and irresponsible small group is more readily organised for its vested interests than a large one, says Mosca. He says further that the power

of any minority is irresistible as against each single individual -the majority-who stands alone before the totality of the organised minority (Mosca 1939:50). He believed that elite has advantages simply because it is unified and less numerous. Besides, Mosca's (1939:61-62) interesting observation, in respect to class character, is that the *political class* tends to become hereditary, if not in law. This, infact, is a landmark contribution in the study of sociological theory. According to Mosca, because of the lust to establish itself in power, this class of people tries to remain dominant for an indefinite period, hence, encouraging oligarchy. However, with some exceptions, such a phenomenon has been in vogue all over the world. Even in democratic societies, successful candidtates make efforts to express hereditary characteristics. Mosca observes that in the French and Italian parliaments there were seen the sons, grandsons, nephews, and sons-in-law, etc. of ex-members.

However, the Marxian doctrine of governing or ruling class has a different theoretical approach regarding the power elite. According to it, all societies bear people of two different socio-economic and cultural classes: bourgeoisie or capitalist and proletariat or workers. The former, who holds monopoly over the means of production and distribution, also controls the political machinery that becomes a means by which it perpetuates its dominance and exploitation on the latter or common working class ranks. The people of ruling classes, comprising a small number of individuals, use the state's political machinery to assert their common interest (Marx 1970:52). According to Raymond Aron (1970:152), Marx believed that political power was the power of one class used in oppressing another which ultimately leads the society to a radical polarisation of classes breaking directly into antagonistic camps; bourgeoisie and proletariat.

Cole has considered elites, not as constituting social classes, but rather as groups which emerge to positions of leadership and influence at every social level- that is to say, as leaders of classes or of other important elements in the social structure (Cole 1955:105-6). At bottom, the central theme of the elitist theory is that a minority population that is superior in thought and action, takes decision affecting the socio-economic and cultural life of the majority of the population in society. The general views of the elitists that power, Pelf, and social status concentrate in a closely integrated socio-economic group, however, is criticised by the pluralists. According to them, in a pluralistic social system, there is not only one integrated elite class but various elite groups with different characteristics. As per Dahl (1961:64-66), there are the political notables, the economic notables, and social notables with hardly any overlap between different groups. The modern democratic polity in which power is largely distributed in the different organs of the



government also refutes the elitist theory. Aaronovitch's (1961:149) observation that the pressure group allegedly compels the governing elites to share their power with the former also invalidates the elitist approach.

Elites and politics are often linked with the concept of power. *Power* being a controversial concept, however, possesses two distinctive meanings in both social sciences and common parlance, i.e., 'power' as the capacity to influence other individuals and 'power' as the legal competence to influence the collective decision making process (Chalise 1987:81). According to Maciver also, power means "the capacity to control, regulate or direct the behaviour of person or things. The power inherent in external nature regulates the universe; working in the laws all must obey. Those possessing power control or command the behaviour of persons and manipulate the energies inherent in things (Maciver 1964:77). As a socio-political phenomena both: power and the leadership or governing elite class, in a society are synonymous for each other. These two forces reflect the ability to influence the actions of the general mass. Therefore, it is hard to separate power from the elite class and the latter from the former. However, an elementary distinction could be made between the two. Power usually implies the capability to force others to react or behave in desired manner. Whereas the elite implies the competence to direct social group of community in a particular fashion in accordance with its desires. In other words, one who holds power in a community is an elite and is generally responsible for the social transformation by shaping the actor's course of action.

Whatever arguments and counter arguments are there, in defence of or against the elitist and pluralistic school of thoughts, the truth may lie closer to the latter. As per P. Scott (1988:129) also, an elite is the most influential and prestigious stratum in a society. It is composed of persons who are recognised as outstanding, are considered leaders in a given field, and exercise tremendous influence in shaping the values and attitudes held by their segment of society. Here the contention that elites exercise an important influence is associated with the power and authority in connection with the four functional problems to be resolved by the four types of strategic elites (Sills: 1968:27): Goal attainment, Adaptation, Integration, and Pattern-maintenance. All these elites are equally wealthy, prestigious, and powerful in their respective areas. However, in a transitional society, the elite of goal attainment have, relatively, much more power than other elite groups, as politics is a key realm of human activity that has a considerable impact on other areas namely- economics, military, diplomacy, science, religious institutions, philosophy, education, art, sports, and other recreational institutions of society.

In other words, in all societies, there are a number of elite groups that exercise power in their respective areas. However, relatively the greater power lies at the hands of the political actors at the top. The political elite, particularly the legislative one, by virtue of their outstanding position in society, not only inspire but also implement the developmental programmes. Nevertheless, the degree of effectiveness of the legislative elites, in launching the programmes and policies of development, may vary from one polity to another. The recruitment process of the legislative elite depends on the nature and structure of the political system. Under a democratic setup, these elites are being recruited through the electoral processes on the basis of the adult franchise and yet on the party lines, while under an autocratic polity, such a popular process has mostly been discouraged if not outrightly prohibited.

### **Nepalese Polity and elite**

The modern Kingdom of Nepal has undergone many political changes since her unification in 1769 A.D. The Shah Kings ruled the country through a centralised system of governance from 1769 to 1846<sup>2</sup>. Then, the Ranas took over the reigns of power reducing the King's status to a figurehead and established their own oligarchy<sup>3</sup>. In spite of this, the Shah Kings have, in the light of the social standing, always a superior position than the Rana prime ministers<sup>4</sup>. The Rana oligarchy continued till 1950. It was opposed by the new educated elites of those days who were inspired by the political movements taking place all over the world, especially in India, against the British rule. In 1951 the Rana rule came to an end giving way to a new democratic order. The clouds of political confusion, however, did not end until 1959 when a democratic constitution was proclaimed by the then king and elections were held in accordance with the spirit of the new constitution. Subsequently, an elected government was formed by the Nepali Congress Party, as that bagged two-thirds of majority in the Lower House of the Parliament— *Pratinidhi Sabha*. Unfortunately, a headlong confrontation developed between the elected government of the Nepali Congress and the monarch, as the former started working in line with the principles of socialism which ultimately led to the Royal Takeover in December 1960 and the consequent dissolution of the elected parliament, and its government. With draconian measures, the elected prime minister and his cabinet colleagues were imprisoned, political parties were banned and a state of emergency was set in. The King ruled the country through peremptory command in the name of Partyless Panchayat system for thirty long years. In the year 1990, when the wind of change was blowing all over the world and subsequently many monolithic regimes were tumbling down in eastern

Europe, a people's prodemocracy movement was launched by the outlawed political parties, that were banned in 1960, under the leadership of the Nepali Congress, which in 50 days of struggle, finally dismantled the Partyless Panchayat System thoroughly.

On November 9, 1990 for the first time in the 221 years political history of modern Nepal, a multiparty democratic constitution was ultimately promulgated. The interim government, which was headed by the acting president of the revolutionary Nepali Congress Party Mr. K.P. Bhattarai was, at bottom, successful in bringing out the most democratic constitution in the political history of the Kingdom. The constitution legalised the political parties, guaranteed the fundamental rights to the people and vested the sovereignty of the country into the citizens.<sup>5</sup> The King who used to carry out the administration, exercising his divine rights, now has become a constitutional monarch thus marking a dramatic shift in the Nepalese politics from an autocracy to a modern democracy. Now, the Kingdom of Nepal, according to the constitution of 1990, has two-tiered legislature: the House of representatives— *Pratinidhi Sabha* and the National Council— *Rastriya Sabha*. The members of the former chamber are directly elected from 205 electoral constituencies— scattered all over the country, based on adult franchise while the latter are elected indirectly.<sup>6</sup> After the promulgation of democratic constitution in 1990, the Kingdom of Nepal, apart from 1959, has already witnessed two general elections during the years 1991 and 1994, respectively. In 1991 elections, the Nepali Congress Party -headed by Mr. K.P. Bhattarai, secured a majority of seats in the Parliament and formed its government. As, president and sitting prime minister Mr. Bhattarai lost his elections, the general secretary of the party Mr. G.P. Koirala, secured a majority of seats in the Parliament and formed its government. Whereas the Communist Party of Nepal (UML)- that came into existence in 1991, catapulted itself into the role of the main opposition in the bicameral legislature. These two parties had sacrificed hundreds of lives of their activists in their relentless struggle for the establishment of multiparty democracy with constitutional monarch in the Kingdom. However, in 1994, there was a midterm elections which gave a birth to a hung parliament. The ruling Nepali Congress Party reduced to 2nd position while the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) emerged as the largest party though in non-majority parliament. Due to nature and composition of parliament, country experimented with various kinds of governments such as minority and coalition, under different articles of the 1990 constitution. Whatever outcome may be there during 1994-1998 period, particularly the coalition politics in Nepal could be attributed to mainly three factors. The first is the compulsion posed by the hung parliament and the second owing to the

power struggle among the top ranking leaders of major political parties. The third, however, universal in nature in the pro-power politics by all political forces at the cost of their doctrinal values.

In the multiparty democratic Kingdom of Nepal, the Parliamentary or the legislative elite, among other goal attainment elites, not only exercise power for their personal ends but also make policies and decisions that carry major consequences in all spheres of society. These elites are directly in command of the influential institutions such as government and its administration, besides parliament. In the present study, by the legislative elite, we mean a group of adult people who are- irrespective of their close as well as open class background, are the members of any chamber - the National Council or the House of Representatives, in parliament and are there to make laws for society, to carry out developmental works in the electoral constituencies and also to solve and redress personal problems of the general populace of society. It is indeed important to state here that in South-Asian democracies, people in general, expect legislative elite or political representatives taking care of their personal as well as constituency's difficulties, apart from making the laws in the interest of society.

### Objective

In the evolving democratic process, the representatives chosen by the political parties and elected to the national legislature by the adult and yet sovereign electorates, play a crucial role in the path of goal attainment. The elected legislative elite's values, judgement, skill, alignment with interest groups, etc. impinge directly as well as indirectly upon the entire social life of the nation as they are supposed to be the key actors and standard setters of society. As the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal where multiparty democracy has recently been ushered in and has started functioning in order to create and establish a new institutional norms for the new political structure, it is academically *sui generis* in exploring the socio-political processes and patterns of the recruitment of the legislative elite in this society, as these elites do not only represent their personal social characteristics but also reflect the socio-economic and political classes of their political parties, interest groups and respective constituents, at the national level.

The social characteristics of the legislative elite of 1991 parliament was studied by the author. It was an empirical work based on Census population. In that study, all 265 members of parliament were interviewed and interestingly, it was found that the bicameral legislature was dominated by members of higher social classes.<sup>7</sup> In view of this, the present study proposes to make an attempt to record the key socio-economic and political

characteristics of the national legislative elite, thereby investigating the class structure of the current 1994-1999 parliament. In Nepal, although, elections for the new House of Representatives, has already been slated for 3rd of May 1999.

### **Methodology**

This Census data, empirical in nature, were collected with the help of an interview-schedule during the years: 1995-1998. The legislators were approached, personally, by the trained research assistants that included a member of the secretariate of the parliament, Singh Darbar, Kathmandu. Besides, the record available at the parliament secretariate also was taken into account in order to ascertain the profile of the legislative elite. On a few occasions, respondent elite gave information with regard to their background, on the telephone, as they had no time to meet the interviewers. The SPSS -a software programme of the computer; was taken into account for statistical analyses of the data.

### **Class Character of Elite and Parliament**

In the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal, the legislative elite occupy the principle role for framing and launching of the programmes directed at achieving the desired social change in society. **Their every decision** carries a substantial consequences, not only on the socio-economic but also on the political sphere of society. Especially, in the post democratic era, this elite class of people, who are being chosen by the adult and yet sovereign electorates, is considered as the most effective and powerful strata. In view of their importance and also strategic status, an attempt has been made here to delineate some of their key social, economic and political characteristics that would lead to divulge the *class structure* of the Nepalese Parliament. When a person is born, he or she is the member of certain class. In the light of social indicators, it can be said that there are two types of classes- closed and open, in every societal order and be it an infant or an adult, both of them find themselves as the members of these classes. Especially, in traditional societies like that of Nepal, when a baby is given birth, she or he has a privilege or disadvantage to be a member of certain station viz. race, caste, religion, economic strata and so on. Education or an economic class of a person has a tendency of mobility- upward or downward or even horizontal, and therefore, these variables are responsible for one's acquired social status or class. Whereas, on the other hand, elements of social fabric such as sex or gender, caste, religion, and race are the rigid and yet closed in nature which provide their membership to an individual but refused to bring mobility in their traditional structure. In other words, every body in the

Nepalese social structure, has two memberships of two different classes, at a time. He or she is the member of closed class such as caste, religion or race and simultaneously also the member of an open class such as education, wealth and profession, governing or non-governing political institution, where an entry is entertained only on one's ability or role performance. At bottom, these close and open bases of social fabric are principally responsible for the formation of the class structure in the Kingdom.

Against this backdrop, by the Class here we mean that a group of people who, through common descent, similarity of occupation, wealth and education, have come to have a similar mode of life, a similar stock of ideas, feelings, attitudes and forms of behaviour and who, on any or all these grounds, meet one another on equal terms and regard themselves, although with varying degrees of explicitness, as belonging to one group (Edwin 1959:32-36). In view of the definition of the term *class*, and also in order to avoid misunderstanding, we have taken into account the following variables that owe both ascribed as well as acquired status of person in the Nepalese society such as: religion, ethnicity/caste, age, occupation, economic status, affiliation of elite with political party, education, etc. around which the class structure of the only Hindu Kingdom, in general and legislative elite in particular, takes place. These social indicators would help identify the social, economic and political class structure of one of the Asian Kingdom's Parliament where democracy has recently been ushered-in.

The demographic composition of the Nepalese society shows that the women constitutes 50 percent of the total population. However, this section of society has a very little share in the area of politics. It is partly due to machopsyché and partly owing to socio-cultural values of society in which female's participation outside family, has always been discouraged. In both-autocratic and democratic system of governances, women have been represented poorly in the legislature. Under Partyless Panchayat Polity, for instance, in the 1981 elections, out of a total of 1096 candidates, there were 3.1 per cent female contestants in the fray and 1.1 per cent were elected to the 112 member unicameral assembly. However, in the elections held in 1986, women's participation as candidates slightly surged ahead. A total of 4.4 percent female candidates out of the total 1548 contestants fought elections and 2.6 per cent got themselves elected in the 112 member legislature (Chalise 1995:60). In the elections of 1991, after the advent of the multiparty democracy, out of a total of 79 female candidates in the fray 8 were elected which amounted to 3.9 per cent in 205 member House of Representatives. Similarly, there were 3 women elected that constituted just 5 per cent to the 60 member National Council (Chalise 1995:60).

**Table 1: The Composition of Parliament on the Basis of Gender**

| Gender | National Council | House of Representatives | Total       |
|--------|------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Male   | 54 (90.0)        | 199 (97.1)               | 253 (95.5)  |
| Female | 6 (10.0)         | 6 (2.9)                  | 12 (4.5)    |
| Total  | 60 (100.0)       | 205 (100.0)              | 265 (100.0) |

According to the table 1 above, women members irrespective of their party background, are represented to the National Council and also in the House of Representatives. However, their share in the former and latter houses of parliament are disheartening as compared to male members. Of the total 60, only 10 per cent are women in the National Council- the Upper House of Parliament while male constitutes 90 percent. And, in the House of Representatives- the Lower House of Parliament, women entrants are limited to 2.9 percent only while rest percentage goes to the male population. It should be mentioned here that the powerful political forces especially their core leadership, of the Kingdom that are overwhelmingly dominated by males, are hesitant to distribute tickets to their women members to contest elections. As a matter of fact, till 1994 elections which was as part of the 1990 constitutional provision, political parties gave party tickets upto 5-6 percent to women members as candidates to contest elections for the two houses of parliament.

In Nepal, like other South-Asian social structures, the institution of marriage not only provides a kind of socio-economic position but also brings an opportunity to an individual to be more responsible, as he or she would be locked into a social relation of the two different families. This nature of social recognition usually is denied to an unmarried person (Chalise 1995:35). And to person, who is aspirant to become a member of a legislature directly choosen by the adult voters, his or her marital status is always meaningful. Inquiry into the marital status of the legislative elite reveals the fact that of the 60 member National Council, there are 90 per cent elite who are married, 1.7 per cent unmarried, 3.3 per cent divorcee and the rest 5 per cent are widow or widower. Likewise, in the 205 members House of Representatives, 95.1 per cent members fall in the category of married people. The remaining 5 per cent is devided among unmarried, divorcee and widow/widower.

**Table 2: Marital Status of Elite in the Houses of Parliament**

| Marital Status | National Council | House of Representatives | Total       |
|----------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Married        | 54 (90.0)        | 195 (95.1)               | 249 (94.0)  |
| Unmarried      | 1 (1.7)          | 3 (1.5)                  | 4 (1.5)     |
| Divorce        | 2 (3.3)          | 1 (0.5)                  | 3 (1.1)     |
| Widow/Widower  | 3 (5.0)          | 6 (2.9)                  | 9 (3.4)     |
| Total          | 60 (100.0)       | 205 (100.0)              | 265 (100.0) |

In other words, of the 265 parliament member, married elite members constitute 94 per cent while unmarried, divorcee, widow/widower register 1.5, 1.1, and 3.4, respectively. It is important to mention here that all the politics of the Nepalese society, since her inception, have always been enjoying the legislatures dominated by the married members.

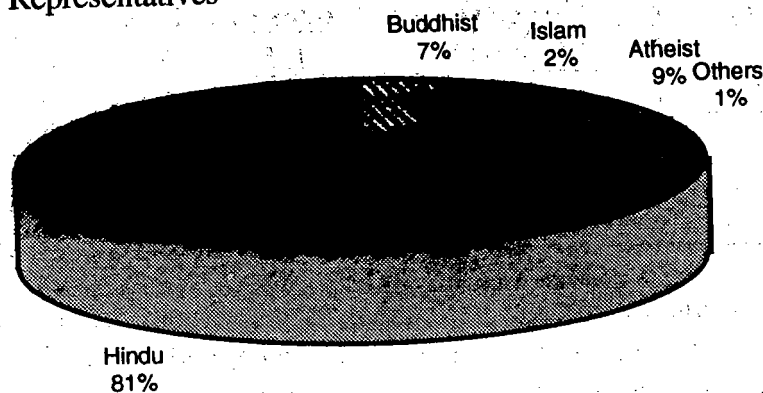
### Religion

The Nepalese social structure is the outcome of the earlier phase of Hindu culture and civilisation. The Kingdom has always been a Hindu nation, constitutionally. Before, 1990, the constitution of the land, besides stating that it was a Hindu country, it had also declared that the Hindu King was the protector of Aryan culture. Almost in line with it, the Article 4 of the democratic constitution of 1990, continues to declare Nepal as a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, *Hindu* constitutional monarchical nation.<sup>8</sup> In Nepal, according to the 1991 Population census, of the total 18,491,097 population, approximately 86.5 per cent are Hindus, about 8.3 per cent are Buddhists, 3.5 per cent Muslims, and 1.7 percent are Christians.<sup>9</sup> The entire demography can broadly be divided into two racial stocks-namely Caucasian and Mongolian. The former stock that comprises of ruling elites of society including the Kings and all the prime ministers, follow Hindu culture. Nevertheless, most of the members of the latter racial stock also show their allegiance to the Hindu religion and culture.<sup>10</sup> Notwithstanding, in recent years, especially after the promulgation of the democratic constitution in 1990, the *de-Hinduisation* process has begun and some of the members of the Mongol ethnic group, are making efforts to reassert their old cultural identity. In doing so, some of them claim themselves as Buddhists while others claim as the followers of Mundhum<sup>11</sup> and a few of them have allowed themselves to be baptised as the Christians.

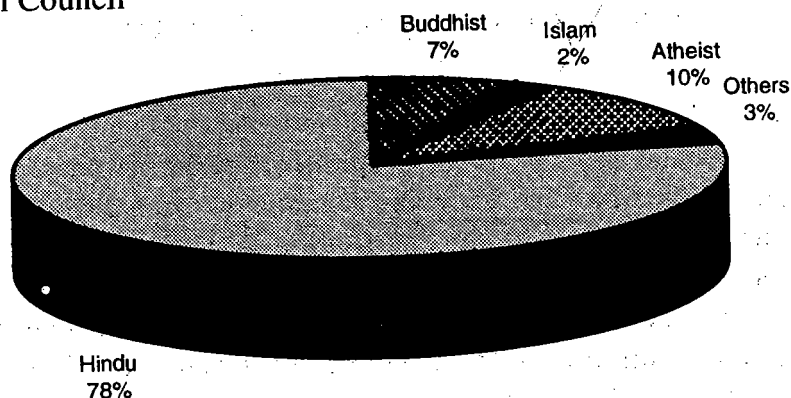


**Fig. 1: Religious Composition in the Houses of Parliament**

**House of Representatives**



**National Council**



The above diagram depicts the religious composition of the Parliament. According to it, of the 60 members, 78.3 per cent are Hindu in the National Council of the Parliament. Similarly, in the 205 member House of Representatives, the Hindus constitutes 81 per cent. The Hindu religious background legislative elites, by and large, have occupied 81.1 percent of seats in the 265 member houses of Parliament.<sup>12</sup> It is noteworthy here that in the earlier Parliament of the year 1991-1994, the percentage covered by the Hindu population was just 79.2 per cent.

The Buddhists constitute 6.7 and 6.8 percent in the 60 and 205 member houses of bicameral legislature, respectively. In the 265 member Parliament, the Buddhists and followers of Islam religions enjoy altogether 6.8 and 1.9 per cent, respectively. They had, coincidentally, the same percentage of seats in the earlier 1991-1994 legislature.

It is interesting to note that in the national legislature of the Kingdom, there are sizeable number of Parliamentarians who claim themselves as the *atheist*. In other words, they say that they do not have faith in any religion. In fact, their presence was felt in the last 1991-94 houses of parliament also

as they were able to register as much as 12.1 per cent seats in the 265 member bicameral legislature (Chalise 1995:33). However, the percentage of Atheist category of the legislative elite, could be attributed to the absence of relatively an extremist Communist Party- known as the United People's Front (UPF) which boycotted the 1994 snap-elections and now, a section of it, has been indulged in the Peoples' War.<sup>13</sup> The UPF had as many as 9 members and was the 3rd largest party in the 205 House of Representatives in 1991 parliament.

### **Ethnic/Caste**

An ethnic or caste usually symbolised as a status for social groups in contemporary society. It is a collection of individuals with a distinctive style of life and certain consciousness of community (Betile 1977:60). It also works as stabiliser of society (Hutton 1987:120). Caste, which confers a certain social status to individuals (Scott 1988:288), has been one of the most powerful bases for socio-political stratification in the Nepalese society (Chalise 1995:100). Since her inception, as a modern nation in 1769, the Kingdom has been ruled by the Hindu Kings and semi-Kings, under authoritarian rules. On the other hand, under democratic nature of polity, she is governed by the higher caste legislative elite such as Bahuns and Chhetris. Racially, all of them are Caucasian and are of hill cultural background.

**Table 3: Ethnic/Caste Structure of the Houses of Parliament**

| Ethnic/Caste group     | National Council | House of Representatives | Grand Total (%)    |
|------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>A. Hill group</i>   | No (%)           | No (%)                   | No (%)             |
| Bahun                  | 26 (43.3)        | 86 (42.0)                | 112 (42.3)         |
| Chhetri                | 8 (13.3)         | 45 (22.0)                | 53 (20.0)          |
| Newar                  | 8 (13.3)         | 13 (6.3)                 | 21 (7.9)           |
| Mongolians             | 8 (13.3)         | 22 (10.7)                | 30 (11.3)          |
| Occupational caste     | 1 (1.7)          | 1 (0.5)                  | 2 (0.8)            |
| <i>Sub-total</i>       | <i>51 (85.0)</i> | <i>167 (81.5)</i>        | <i>218 (82.3)</i>  |
| <i>B. Terai Groups</i> |                  |                          |                    |
| Brahmin                | 4 (6.7)          | 5 (2.4)                  | 9 (3.4)            |
| Kshatriya              | 0 (0.0)          | 2 (1.0)                  | 2 (0.8)            |
| Tribals (tharus)       | 1 (1.7)          | 12 (5.9)                 | 13 (4.9)           |
| Yadav                  | 1 (1.7)          | 9 (4.4)                  | 10 (3.8)           |
| Occupational caste     | 2 (3.3)          | 6 (2.9)                  | 8 (3.0)            |
| Muslims                | 1 (1.7)          | 4 (2.0)                  | 5 (1.9)            |
| <i>Sub-total</i>       | <i>9 (15.0)</i>  | <i>38 (18.5)</i>         | <i>47 (17.7)</i>   |
| <b>Grand Total (%)</b> | <b>60 (100.)</b> | <b>205 (100.0)</b>       | <b>265 (100.0)</b> |

In Nepal, the ethnic or caste groups, on the bases of their culture and topography or geographical conditions, can broadly be classified into *hill* and *terai* communities. According to the above table, in the 60 member National Council, the hill group has a huge majority of 85 per cent while the terai group enjoys only 15 per cent. Likewise, the hill groups, in the 205 member House of Representatives constitute 81.5 per cent followed by terai groups with the remaining 18.5 per cent. In the 265 member national bicameral legislature of the Kingdom, the hill community or ethnic group alone occupies as high as 82.3 per cent and the remaining 17.7 per cent is shared by the terai ethnic group. The hill group which had already made its overwhelming presence, during 1991-1994 Parliament by securing 81.13 per cent of seats, has further been able to increase its strength by gaining of 1.17 per cent more seats in the current 1994-1999 Parliament.

The caste structure as per the data in the above table, indicates that among the hill groups, higher castes such as Bahun and Chhetri dominate overwhelmingly in both the houses of Parliament. The former, of the 60 member National Council, constitutes a relative majority of 43.3 per cent however, the latter Chhetri scores 13.3, per cent. Among the other hill and yet non-higher caste groups, the Newar constitutes 13.3 per cent, Mongolians,<sup>14</sup> 13.3 per cent and Occupational minority caste occupies 1.7 per cent. Similarly, in the 205 member House of Representatives, again a relative majority of 42 per cent is occupied by the Bahuns, 22 per cent by Chhetris, 6.3 per cent by the Newar, 10.7 per cent by the Mongolians and 0.5 per cent by the occupational minority caste groups. At the national level, in the 265 member Parliament, 42.3 per cent- a relative majority of seats is occupied alone by the Bahuns. The Chhetris constitute altogether 20 per cent, followed by the Newar 7.9 per cent, the Mongolians 11.3 per cent and 0.8 per cent by the Occupational minority caste.

Contrary to the hill pattern, the terai groups on the other hand, have set a different nature of caste representation to the national legislature. According to the data illustrated above, of the 60 National Council members, though the Brahmin constitutes 6.7 per cent, nevertheless, the Kshatriya lacks absolutely. The tribal group does have only 1.7 per cent followed by the Yadav 1.7, Occupational minority caste 3.3 and Muslims 1.7 per cent. Unlike the National Council, in the 205 House of Representatives, the Brahmins score only 2.4 per cent followed by the Kshatriya with 1 per cent. However, the tribals occupy 5.9 per cent, the Yadav 4.4 per cent, the Occupational minority castes 2.9 per cent and Muslims 2 per cent. This pattern indeed is indicative of the fact that, among terai groups, the non-higher castes are much more effective in the House of Representatives- as this house is directly elected by the adult voters than the National Council.

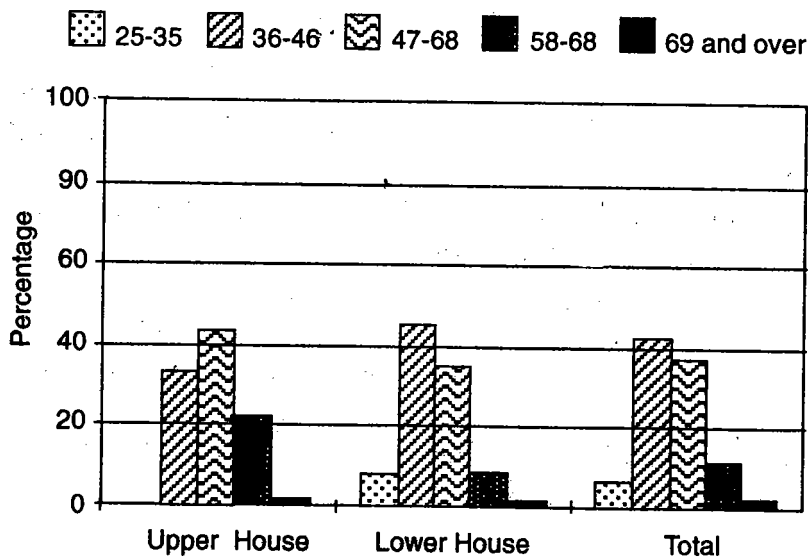
More specifically, of the 47 terai legislators, only 11 (23%) seats are captured by the higher castes such as Brahmin and Kshatriya while the rest seats i.e. 77%, have gone to other non-higher caste groups, including the Muslims, who constitute altogether 10.6 per cent of the 36 seats.

It would perhaps be relevant to bring to the reader's notice here that the last Parliament of Nepal also had witnessed almost similar nature of ethnic or caste representation i.e. the hill groups constituted 81.13 per cent while the terai groups mustered the rest 18.87 per cent, in the 265 national council.

### Age

Age, since ancient times, has been a significant factor in determining the nature of role performance and value orientation (Singh 1974:59). It is also associated with experience, wisdom and even elite status in a traditional society (Thakur 1981:131). In Nepal, where most of the constitutional organs, including political parties, of the society are headed by the senior age people; it is interesting to know the age structure of the Parliament. Mention may be made that as per a rule laid down by the Election Commission of Nepal, a person aspiring to contest the elections of the Kingdom must be 25 years old for the House of Representatives and 35 years old for the National Council. Elite and Age-Structure in the Houses of Parliament.

**Figure 2: Elite and Age Structure in the Houses of Parliament**



The above Table shows the age-groups of the legislative members of the parliament. With a view to make the data tangible, they are here split into

five different categories with an interval of 10 frequencies. According to the data, of the 60 National Council members, a relative majority of 43.3 per cent comes from 47-57 age-group. The 2nd largest per centage i.e. 33.3 goes to 36-46 age group category. The rest 21.7 and 1.7 percentage are shared by 58-68 age-group elite.

Contrary to the National Council, in the 205 member House of Representatives, a relative majority of percentage of 45.4 per cent, comes from the 36-46 age category while the second largest percentage i.e. 35.1, come from 47-57 age group. The remaining percentage such as 8.8, 8.3 and 2.4, come from 58-68, 25-35 and 69 and above age groups, respectively.

At the parliament level, out of the total 265 members, a relative majority of 42.6 per cent is constituted by 36-46 age group members, which is slightly less by 1.2 percent than earlier parliament, as in the 1991-1994 legislature, there was as much as 43.8 per cent members from 36-46 age category. The second relative majority of 37 per cent of the members of parliament comes from 47-57 age group. However, 11.7 percent of elites belong to the 58-68 age group. Whereas, the remaining 6.4 and 2.3 percent fall in the youngest and oldest category of age groups, respectively.

**Table 4: Family Structure of the Elite in Parliament**

| Family structure | Upper House | Lower House | Total       |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Joint            | 18 (30.0)   | 105 (51.2)  | 123 (46.4)  |
| Nuclear          | 42 (70.0)   | 100 (48.8)  | 142 (53.6)  |
| Total            | 60 (100.0)  | 205 (100.0) | 265 (100.0) |

In Nepalese social system, family as a basic unit, has a great influence over its members. The family not only reigns over them, but also tends to meet their social requirements such as social rituals, marriages, division of property, education etc. However, the extend and nature of influence of the family over its members and pattern of relation between the two, without any doubt, to a greater degree, depends on the family structure: joint or nuclear? The former is regarded as a traditional type while the latter as modern or contemporary which is the by product of the industrial revolution and urbanisation process. In the light of these two types of family structures, here it has been tried to understand the nature of family in which the legislative elites of Nepal live.

It is indeed interesting to note that the National Council is overwhelmingly occupied by the members who have nuclear family structure. Of the 60 members, 70 per cent come from nuclear family background. However, in the case of the House of Representatives, a simple

majority i.e. 51.2 per cent of the members are living in joint nature of family structure. Notwithstanding, almost equally, i.e. 48.8 per cent of the members of House of Representatives, have a background of traditional joint family structure. One of the striking features that could be seen in the above Table 4 is that the national council is composed of both types of families. In Nepal the overwhelming population live in rural areas. Not only the industrial revolution but also education and media brought a change in the traditional family structure. This assumption is also validated by Table 5 showing that of the 265 members, 66 percent come from the rural society.

**Table 5: Social Condition of Upper House and Lower House Members**

| Social Condition | Upper House | Lower House | Total       |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Rural            | 33 (55.0)   | 142 (69.3)  | 175 (66.0)  |
| Urban            | 27 (45.0)   | 63 (30.7)   | 90 (34.0)   |
| Total            | 60 (100.0)  | 205 (100.0) | 265 (100.0) |

The relation of human life with the social environment is extremely intimate, and therefore, it is always important to take it into account in order to understand one's personality traits, socialisation process and even value-orientation.

The social condition here refers to the social environment in which the national legislative elite born and brought up. According to the table, of the 60 members, 55- a majority percentage, hail from rural social condition while the rest 45 percent come from urban condition. Similarly, of the 205 members of the House of Representatives, 69.3 per cent have rural background while the remaining hail from an urban social condition.

### **Economic Class**

**Occupation:** Occupation of an individual, especially in a non-industrial societies, is not only the source of livelihood but also a matter of status (Edwin 1959:533) and prestige (Treiman 1994:208-9). It is therefore an influential factor in the process of his or her socialisation. With a view to understand it, an indirect question i.e. *what is the main source of your income in order to meet the basic requirements such as food, clothes and shelter, for your family, apart from the Parliament*, was posed to the elite respondents. On the bases of their responses, the gathered data were categorised mainly into three occupations namely agriculture, industry/business and others,<sup>15</sup> which are discussed below.

**Table 6: Occupational/Professional Background of Elite**

| Source of income  | Upper House | Lower House | Total       |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Agriculture       | 35 (58.3)   | 163 (79.5)  | 198 (74.7)  |
| Industry/Business | 8 (13.3)    | 19 (9.3)    | 27 (10.2)   |
| Others            | 17 (28.3)   | 23 (11.2)   | 40 (15.1)   |
| Total             | 60 (100.0)  | 205 (100.0) | 265 (100.0) |

As per the data illustrated in Table 6, most of the legislators have, irrespective of their houses in the Parliament, regarded agriculture as their chief source of the livelihood. The percentage covered by this section, in the National Council, is 58.3 and in the House of Representatives, it is 79.5, which, nevertheless, shows that comparatively the latter house consists of more agriculture background elite than the former house in the parliament. Contrary to it, however, relatively the National Council is comprised of more members from industry/business class than the House of Representatives. The data here reveal that the National Council, of its 60 members, enjoys 13.3 per cent from the industry or business group while the House of Representatives, of its 205 members, has only 9.3 per cent from this class. However, from the other category, 28.3 per cent elite are represented in the National Council and 11.2 per cent in the House of Representatives. At the national level, of the 265 members, the Parliament does witness as much as 74.7 per cent members from agriculture occupation and only 10.2 per cent from business/trade communities. The rest 15.1 per cent elite, however, hail from the other category.

When compared the present houses with the last Parliament, it is worth noticing here that mainly the representation of the agriculture background members to the legislature has slightly been declined while the percentage of the representation of the industry/business class has been considerably enhanced. In fact, the 1991-94 Parliament, had consisted of 79.6 and 3.8 per cent members from agriculture and industry/business occupations, respectively.

**Economic Status:** Sociologically speaking, in order to know one's social standing, it is essential to understand his or her economic class, as the latter is closely and unavoidably associated with the former. As a natural phenomenon, the economic class of the members of society, is unevenly distributed in all sections, and due to it, individuals are placed in certain socio-economic groups. George Orwell, in his work, has said that throughout recorded times and probably since the end of the neolithic age,

there have been three kinds of people in the world: the high, the middle and the low with irreconcilable aims (Orwell 1949:15).

According to Abraham and Morgan, who have made a contribution on the thoughts of Karl Marx, say that the crucial determinant of an individual's behaviour is one's relation to property (Abraham and Morgan 1985:37). In Nepal, where feudal and aristocratic values still dominate the social sphere of human life, the economic class weights most heavily in ranking of person in the socio-political hierarchy. This phenomenon has even affected the revolutionary political parties of the Kingdom. The study carried out by the author showed that the political parties had a tendency to distribute election tickets to those party workers who, within the party structure, occupy a higher economic rank (Chalise 1995:42:49 and 56).

However, it may be mentioned here that, in the Nepalese context, the economic class of a person is loaded with a connotation of relativity, as the value of land property in various districts of the Kingdom including the capital city of Kathmandu, substantially varies from one place to another. Notwithstanding, an economic class or status of a person should be judged on the basis of his or her position in their respective areas of residence as compared to other's status. In the light of this constraints, in order to investigate the economic standing or status of the legislative elite, they were asked to judge their economic class at their own<sup>16</sup> at two levels namely-among the general population at the *electoral constituency level* and among the activists of their respective political parties at the *constituency level*.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 7: Economic Class/Status of Elite in Houses of Parliament**

| Houses of Parliament     | Economic Class/Status           |               |             |                |                                                       |               |             |                |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|
|                          | At electoral constituency level |               |             |                | Among party activists at electoral constituency level |               |             |                |
|                          | High                            | Middle        | Low         | Total          | High                                                  | Middle        | Low         | Total          |
| House of representatives | 72<br>(35.1)                    | 116<br>(56.6) | 17<br>(8.3) | 205<br>(100.0) | 109<br>(53.2)                                         | 86<br>(42.0)  | 10<br>(4.9) | 205<br>(100.0) |
| National Council         | 8<br>(13.3)                     | 46<br>(76.7)  | 6<br>(10.0) | 60<br>(100.0)  | 18<br>(30)                                            | 35<br>(58.3)  | 7<br>(11.7) | 60<br>(100.0)  |
| Total                    | 80<br>(30.2)                    | 162<br>(61.1) | 23<br>(8.7) | 265<br>(100.0) | 127<br>(47.9)                                         | 121<br>(45.7) | 17<br>(6.4) | 265<br>(100.0) |

Table 7 shows the economic status of the members of the Parliament. According to the table, the economic class of the elite of the National Council, *among the general population at the electoral constituency level*,



ranges from higher to the lower stratas. Of the 60 members, an overwhelming majority of 76.7 per cent legislative elite comes from the middle class followed by 13.3 per cent from the higher and 10 per cent from the lower classes, respectively. Almost likewise, of the 205 members of the House of Representatives, a majority of 56.6 per cent members, fall in the middle economic class category while the remaining 35.1 and 8.3 per cent of the elite owe to the higher and the lower economic stratas, respectively. The data, at the Parliament level, depict that most of the members, that constitutes 61.1 per cent, have a *middle* economic class background among the general populace at the constituency. The *higher* economic background members enjoy as much as 30 per cent and the *lower* economic status elite registers as less as 8.7 per cent strength in the bicameral legislature.

Unlike the legislative elite among the general population of their respective electoral constituencies, the table at the same time also shows a different pattern of the elite's economic class, as compared to their party's activists at the electoral constituencies. Of the 60 members of the National Council, only 58.3 per cent belongs to the *middle* economic strata. The *higher* and *lower* classes elite, however, occupy 30.0 and 11.7 per cent strength, respectively. The picture of the House of Representatives, nonetheless, divulges a different picture, as it witnesses that of the 205 its members- who are elected to the house directly by the adult voters, a majority percentage i.e. 53.2 per cent of them, hail from an upper or *higher* economic class, which significantly, indicates that the political parties back, with election tickets, to those partymen who enjoy relatively a better economic clout at the electoral constituency. The remaining, 42 per cent of elite, nevertheless, come from *middle* economic strata followed by *lower* class with 4.9 per cent. The table, at the national legislature level, illustrates that out of its 265 total elite, a relative majority of 47.9 per cent, are having an upper or the *higher* economic class background, among background among the activists of their respective political parties at the constituency level. Whereas, the 2nd largest percentage i.e. 45.7, is held by the *middle* class background members. The *lower* class background elite, in the Parliament, has an insignificant volume of strength i.e. 6.4 per cent.

### **Political Class**

**Political Parties:** In Nepal, originally, political parties were formed with a view to work against the Rana oligarchy that ruled the society from 1846-1950, autocratically. After the success of the historic 1950-51 revolution, spearheaded by the Nepali Congress, political parties became the part and parcell of the Nepalese political process. Notwithstanding, in 1960,

following the royal takeover, these political elements were outlawed for almost 30 years.

Perhaps, learning a lesson from the past, the revolutionary political forces which now were the determinants just after the success of the peoples' movement in 1990 and were actively participating as members in the constitution drafting body, made the Article 12 in the democratic constitution of 1990, that unequivocally denies to ban or outlaw a political party.<sup>18</sup> As a consequence, parties have become the soul of the democratic polity and are supposed to form and represent the *will* of the people.

**Table 8: Political Parties in the Houses of Parliament**

| Political Parties              | National Council | House of Representatives | Total       |
|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Nepali Congress                | 29 (48.3)        | 89 (43.4)                | 118 (44.5)  |
| Communist Party of Nepal (UML) | 17 (28.3)        | 90 (43.9)                | 107 (40.4)  |
| NSP                            | 0 (0.0)          | 3 (1.5)                  | 3 (1.1)     |
| NDP                            | 4 (6.7)          | 19 (9.3)                 | 23 (8.7)    |
| NLPP                           | 0 (0.0)          | 2 (1.0)                  | 2 (0.8)     |
| Others                         | 0 (0.0)          | 2 (1.0)                  | 2 (0.8)     |
| King's Nominee                 | 10 (16.7)        | 0 (0.0)                  | 10 (3.8)    |
| Total                          | 60 (100.0)       | 205 (100.0)              | 265 (100.0) |

The above table shows the strength of the political parties in the parliament for 1994-1999 period. There are, altogether 6 parties represented to the Parliament excluding the King's 10 (ten) nominees to the National Council or *upper house*. Among them, however, only 4 are constitutionally recognised as the national parties as they could meet the 3 per cent clause of the electoral laws<sup>19</sup> of the land. Of these parties, the Nepali Congress (NC), the Communist Party of Nepal (UML)<sup>20</sup>, Nepal Sadbhawana (goodwill) Party (NSP) and National Democratic Party (NDP)<sup>21</sup> have secured more than 3 percent of votes in the general elections of 1994, but the Nepal Labour and Peasant's Party (NLPP) and a faction-known to be associated with left extremist, are failed to fulfill the electoral clause. Nevertheless, they each have two representatives in the House of Representatives or *the lower house* in the parliament. Mention may be made here that NLPP had three members in the parliament but one of them, who was elected from western hill constituency, was seduced by the big Nepal Communist Party (UML) to its fold. In the 1991-1994 Parliament also NLPP had not met 3

percent clause while it had, then also, two representatives to the House of Representatives.

According to the table, the NC enjoys 48.3 percent seats in the 60 member National Council and 43.4 per cent in the 205 member House of Representatives. In total, the NC has privilege to have the support of 44.5 percent legislative elite in the 265 member Parliament of the Kingdom. However, looking at its past performance in the 1991 general elections, the NC's stature could be attributed as disappointing. In 1991-1994, the NC had 56.2 percent seats in the 265 member legislature (Chalise 1995:30). On the other hand, the CPN (UML), has 28.3 percent strength in the 60 member National Council and significantly 43.9 per cent seats in the 205 strategically powerful lower house of the Parliament. Yet, it trails behind the NC at the national level, as it has 4 percent less strength i.e. 40.4, than the latter, in the Parliament. Notwithstanding, the CPN (UML) has substantially enhanced its support base as compared to its strength in the last 1991-1994 Parliament. Earlier, it had only (68 + 13) 30.5 per cent seats while now, in the current legislature, it enjoys as much as 43.9 per cent in the 265 member legislature (Chalise 1995:29).

The NSP- a regional-cum-ethnic party, champions the cause of Tarai *Madhesi* people in the plains of Nepal. It does not have, at the moment, any member in the National Council mainly owing to betrayal by its one member. The member who was elected to the upper house of parliament on the ticket of NSP, not only left it but also opened a new socialist party, nonetheless, relatively a secular organisation than his mother Party. The NSP has 1.5 per cent seats in the 205 member House of Representatives which altogether amounts 1.1 percent seats at 265 member national parliament. It could be noteworthy here that this party has considerably lost its ground as compared to the last Parliament. In the last 1991-1994, the NSP had as much as 2.6 per cent of seats in the 265 member bicameral legislature. Notwithstanding, the NSP has been able to meet 3 per cent clause of the electoral law of the land in both of the general elections held in 1991 and 1994.

Contrary to the NSP, the NDP- a political force led by the ruling elites of the old Partyless Panchayat System, had only 1.5 per cent seats in the 1991-94 national legislature and many had then predicted that the party was rout to by the pro-democracy forces and would not be able to survive in future. But, four and half years later, in 1994 snap-polls, it, unbelievably, emerged as an unavoidable political entity, as it secured 6.7 and 9.3 per cent seats in the National Council and House of Representatives, respectively. The reason for a gain in the strength of the NDP, of course, not only because of the disappointment of the general mass with the irresponsible

behaviour of pro-democratic forces, but also due to the internal feuds within the ruling Nepali Congress Party during the 1994 polls.

The other non-national parties such as the NLP and others,<sup>22</sup> who have been unable to find births in the National Council, nonetheless, each occupies 1 per cent in the 265 member bicameral legislature.

### Profession/Job before Politics

It is always important to know the professional class of a person who has been participating in the decision making process of a society. In fact, one's professional class or background, in which he or she spends a considerable period of time, plays a significant role in moulding his or her personal behaviour, attitude and also the orientation pattern. Such a background phenomenon helps one to choose or join a certain professional career in life. Mills and Gerth are of the opinion that politicians are likely to be recruited from dispensable profession such as journalism (Mills and Gerth 1970:206). Similarly Lipset (Lipset 1971:365) also believed that the legal profession substantially could transfer a social animal into a political being. Against this backdrop, an effort has been made here to understand that from which career or job the members to Parliament have entered an active politics of society.

**Table 9: Houses of Parliament and Profession/Job Before Entering Active Politics**

| Profession/Job before Politics | National Council | House of Representatives | Total (%)   |
|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Study (student)                | 26 (43.3)        | 110 (53.7)               | 136 (51.3)  |
| Farming                        | 6 (10.0)         | 25 (12.2)                | 31 (11.7)   |
| GO/NGOs service                | 15 (25.0)        | 58 (28.3)                | 73 (27.5)   |
| Industry/business              | 1 (1.7)          | 3 (1.5)                  | 4 (1.5)     |
| Others                         | 12 (20.0)        | 9 (4.4)                  | 21 (7.9)    |
| Total                          | 60 (100.0)       | 205 (100.0)              | 265 (100.0) |

According to the table, of its 60 members, the National Council of Parliament constitutes a relative majority of 43.3 per cent from the students class. In other words, a huge no. of members of the upper house of Parliament were studying as a student in some educational institutions before they entered an active politics. The elite with farming background are only 10 per cent, while employees of some non-governmental/governmental organisations, however, constitute the 2nd highest i.e. 25 per cent, and the elite involved in the business/industry profession before their active

participation in politics, occupy only 1.7 per cent. The others category of elite, however, has as many as 20 per cent elite. Likewise, in the 205 member House of Representatives, a majority percentage of elite were found involved in an active politics from their student life. This category, nevertheless, alone constitutes 53.7 per cent alone. Like in the National Council, the 2nd largest percentage i.e. 28.3, is shared by the elite with an NGO/GO background. The rest percentage of the elite are split into farming 12.2, business/industry 1.5 and others 4.4 per cent categories as profession of elite prior to entering active politics of society.

At the national Parliament level, of the 265 members, a majority of 51.3 per cent of them come from students class while the 2nd largest percent is covered by the elite with NGO/GO background members. The farming background elite constituted 11.7, business/industrialist covered 1.5 per cent while the others category of elite, nonetheless, constituted the remaining 7.9 per cent.

### Education

Education of a person, in all developed or developing societies, has indeed been a crucial factor for determining one's social position. In other words, the educational element, as it has been witnessed especially in developing nations, generally unlocks opportunities to every one for his or her upward socio-political and economic mobility. Therefore, in these developing societies, education has always been regarded as a gateway to elite strata. The main reason for attaching the education to the elite position is due to the fact that the quality of an individual's role performance and judgement, in any field of social life such as economy or politics or even cultural, is significantly correlated to the level of education he or she has attained.

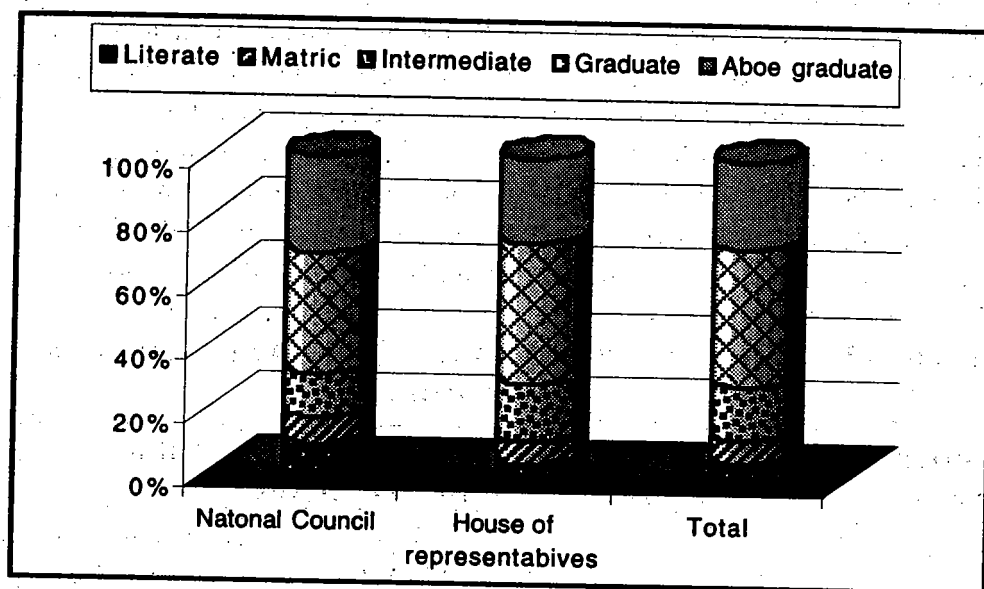
**Table 10: Composition of Parliament as per Elite's Level of Education**

| Education level | National Council | House of Representatives | Total (%)   |
|-----------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Literate        | 6 (10.0)         | 9 (4.4)                  | 15 (5.7)    |
| Matric          | 5 (8.3)          | 15 (7.3)                 | 20 (7.5)    |
| Intermediate    | 8 (13.3)         | 36 (17.6)                | 44 (16.6)   |
| Graduate        | 23 (38.3)        | 91 (44.4)                | 114 (43.0)  |
| Above graduate  | 18 (30.0)        | 54 (26.3)                | 72 (27.2)   |
| Total           | 60 (100.0)       | 205 (100.0)              | 265 (100.0) |

Here an attempt has been made in order to understand the educational background of the houses of Parliament. According to the table, of the 60 members, the National Council consists of as many as 38.3 per cent

graduate and another 30 per cent above graduate elite. The members, who are just intermediate, matriculate and literate,<sup>23</sup> constitute 13.3, 8.3 and 10.0 per cent, respectively. Similarly, the 205 member House of Representatives enjoys as much as 44.4 per cent graduates and 26.3 per cent above graduate members. The intermediate, matriculate and literate<sup>24</sup> categories occupy 17.6, 7.3 and 4.4 per cent, respectively.

**Figure 3: Education Background of Members of the Houses of Parliament**



Educationally, at the national level, the 265 member Parliament is dominated by the graduate members with their relative majority of 43.0 per cent. Moreover, the members who are above graduate, registered as many as 27.2 per cent. These two sections, of elite indeed clearly show that the Parliament is overwhelmingly dominated by educated members. The intermediate, matriculate and literate<sup>25</sup> constituted 16.6, 7.5, and 5.7 per cent, respectively.

It may be mentioned here that comparatively, the present houses of Parliament, of course relatively, enjoys more educated members than the last 1991 parliament. The previous Parliament constituted, out of its total 265 members, only 39.2 per cent graduate, and 23.0 per cent above graduation elite (Chalise 1995:37).

**Inspiration in Politics:** Entering in an active politics is an unusual phenomenon in the Nepali society. Particularly the outlawed politics or anti-establishment politics, during Partyless Panchayat regime i.e. 1960-

1990, was a crime declared by the state. Punishment meted out for such a crime were- the confiscation of property, imprisonment and even execution. This kind of punishment was carried out not only against the people directly involved but also against the persons who cooperate with them. Notwithstanding, people have been participating in the pro-and anti-establishment politics of society.<sup>26</sup>

In spite of such state terror, people in general and the members of the Pro-democracy political parties, took part in the anti-establishment politics during 1960-1990 period. What were the reasons for their anti-polity activities that involved risks not only for their property but also for their lives? In view of this, here it is tried to know the agencies or factors that, at bottom, had inspired or motivated the legislative members- who either worked for the Partyless Panchayat System or struggled against it with an objective to restore multiparty democracy in society, to join an active politics as their profession. In order to make a clear distinction, the entire agencies, which were gathered through the interviews, are divided into two broad: Primary Social Group and Secondary Social Group,<sup>27</sup> categories.

**Table 11: Elite and their Inspiring/Motivating agency in Active Politics**

| <b>Inspiring agency</b> | <b>National Council</b> | <b>House of Representatives</b> | <b>Total (%)</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Primary group           | 28 (46.7)               | 84 (41.0)                       | 112 (42.3)       |
| Secondary group         | 32 (53.3)               | 121 (59.0)                      | 153 (57.7)       |
| Total                   | 60 (100.0)              | 205 (100.0)                     | 265 (100.0)      |

According to the table, of the 60 members of the National Council, a majority of 53.3 per cent elite are found being inspired, to join active politics, by the agencies of the secondary social group while the remaining 46.7 per cent are found inspired by the agencies of the primary social group. Likewise, of the 205 members in the House of Representatives, a majority percentage of 59.0 are witnessed to have been inspired by the agencies of the secondary social group. The rest 41 per cent of the members of the Lower House of Parliament are, however, found being inspired by the agencies of primary social group.

At the national level, it is found that of the 265 members of the parliament, a majority of 57.7 percent legislative elite are inspired, to take an active part in the politics of society, by the agencies of the secondary social group while the rest 42.3 per cent of the members are found to have been inspired by the agencies of the primary social group.

**Imprisonment/Incarceration:** As has already been pointed out in previous chapter that the democracy was restored in 1990. Before it, the king-as an active leader, used to carry not only on the administration but also on the government denying democracy and fundamental rights to the common people. Political parties were outlawed since 1960 and any attempt to form or organise them was considered as a state crime. Any individual or institution found participating in such an unlawful act was levelled as anti-national element and he, she, it, or they were severely punished. Notwithstanding, the banned political organisations, at the cost of their property and lives, continued their struggle against the King's direct rule. Ultimately, in 1990, the outlawed political forces, with the massive support of the common citizens, could give a *coup d' grace* to the 30 years old Partyless Polity of the King. Nevertheless, during this long and arduous struggle for the restoration of multiparty democracy in society, the pro-change forces suffered a lot. Some of them were killed while many of them had to face incarceration or imprisonment. Against this backdrop, attempt has been made here to understand the composition of the parliament. In other words, to what extent the outlawed political elite- who were incarcerated, and those elite who are not incarcerated, are represented to the national Parliament of the Kingdom. In order to examine this question, respondent elite were asked whether they were ever incarcerated or imprisoned by the Partyless Panchayat regime of the King, on the charge that they participated in the anti-system movement, or not?

**Table 12: Parliament on the basis of Incarcerated/Non-incarcerated Elite.**

| Inspiring/Non-incarcerated | National Council | House of Representatives | Total (%)   |
|----------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Incarcerated               | 34 (56.7)        | 144 (70.2)               | 178 (67.2)  |
| Non-incarcerated           | 26 (43.3)        | 61 (29.8)                | 87 (32.8)   |
| Total                      | 60 (100.0)       | 205 (100.0)              | 265 (100.0) |

According to Table 12 above, of the 60 National Council members, a majority of 56.7 reported that they were incarcerated/imprisoned for their activities against the Partyless Panchayat system while remaining 43.3 per cent of the legislative elite<sup>28</sup> denied such experience of incarceration. Slightly different than the National Council, in the 205 members of the House of Representatives, it was found that an overwhelming majority of 70.2 per cent elite were incarcerated by the *ancienne regime* for their



participation or involvement against the system. Nevertheless, a small size of 29.8 percent of elite said that they were not incarcerated for the stated reasons by the deposed Partyless Panchayat system.

At the national level, it was found that, of the 265 member Parliament, a majority of 67.2 per cent elite were incarcerated for their active participation to overthrow the old Partyless Panchayat regime of the King. The rest 32.8 per cent of elite, however, were non-incarcerated.

It would be interesting and significant as well to mention here that the present houses of Parliament witness more non-incarcerated legislative members than the previous houses of parliament. In the last 1991 parliament, the percentage registered by the non-imprisoned or incarcerated members was just 21.1 per cent. Now, it has been reached to 32.8 per cent a gain of 11.7 per cent, in the present 1994-99 Parliament.

### Conclusions

Empirical studies pertaining to the representative system not only show the countours of the power structure but also extends an explanation regarding the nature and dynamics of the socio-political processes. The empirical findings of the present study, with regard to the class structure of the houses of the parliament, interestingly show that the representative politics, under multiparty democracy, has also been advantageous to the socio-economically privileged groups. Such a phenomenon had been invogue under Partyless Panchayat Polity. The socio-economically weak populace have not been able to effectively participate in the kingdom's political process, partly owing to their confirmity to the traditional value system and role stereotype and also partly because of their socially disadvantageous or lower status in societal structure.

**Social Class:** The data, on the legislative elite and their social class in the houses of the parliament, show that the followers of the Hindu religion dominate both houses of parliament by occupying as much as 81 per cent of seats. Ethnically, the hill background elite are overwhelmingly represented as these groups capture as many as 82.3 per cent of the parliamentary seats. The tarai groups constitute the remaining 17.7 per cent in the 265 member bicameral legislature. Among the hill groups, the Bahun scores a very high percentage of the seats. The Chhetris, who used to dominate the national legislature under Chhetri King's Partyless Panchayat rule before 1990, are now being overshadowed by the Bahuns in the legislature after 1991 (Chalise 1995:55). These two higher castes, nevertheless, enjoy 75.6 per

cent among 165 hill members and 63.3 per cent of the seats in the 265 member parliament.

Contrary to the hill groups, among the tarai castes, the Brahmin and Kshatriya are poorly represented to the legislature. The non-higher but majority castes in many electoral areas, including Muslims, dominate the legislative elite recruitment pattern. These non-higher caste and communities constitute altogether 13.5 per cent out of their total 17.7 per cent seats in the 265 member parliament. Racially, the parliament is overwhelmingly dominated by the Caucasian stock, irrespective of their hill and tarai ethnic background. Another race- that forms the social composition of the Kingdom, i.e. Mongolian, mustered only 16.3 per cent.<sup>29</sup> In the light of the dominance of certain race, religion, caste and ethnic background elite in the parliament, here, it would be relevant to point one important fact out that the Kingdom of Nepal, which except for a short democratic period of 18 months i.e. from 1959-1960, most of the time has been directly and yet autocratically ruled by the most powerful Shah Kings and Rana semi-Kings, and significantly these two also owe the same elements in their social background. Nevertheless, in accordance with the Hindu values, the Shah Kings in Nepal, have been regarded and worshiped, mostly by illiterate people, as the incarnation of God Vishnu- a protector of the universe. In a society where the population of the Hindus constitute approximately 86.5 per cent and the constitution of the land declares herself as the Hindu Kingdom, it is undoubtedly a matter of privilege and also advantage to be one of the members of this social class.

In terms of the age, our findings indicate that the legislative eliteship in the popular and yet competitive politics of the Kingdom, is neither only influenced by the younger generation nor limited to the older generation. It is, however, centred between the two. According to the data, the 36-46 aged elite registered a relative majority in the Lower House while the 47-57 aged elite constituted a relative majority in the Upper House of the Parliament. In other words, electorates and political parties tend to elect and nominate those legislative candidates who are aged between 36-46 for the lower house and persons aged between 47-57 for the upper house of the parliament.

**Economic Class:** Occupationally, agriculture or farming background elite significantly dominate both the houses of parliament. Most of the legislative elite of the Kingdom still are dependent on the agriculture as their main source of income to meet elite and their family's basic requirements, besides the regular income from the parliament. It has been found that economically most of the elite enjoy the middle class strata among the general populace in their respective electoral constituencies.

However, the economic status of the majority of the elite is observed as higher, amongst the activists of their respective political parties, at the electoral constituency level.

**Political Class:** Political parties or institutions, which are supposed to form the *will* of the common people were outlawed for 30 years. They are now constitutionally legalised after the promulgation of the multiparty constitution in 1990. The Nepalese Parliament now enjoys a number of peoples' representatives who are directly linked with the various political forces working in the political process of society. Among them, however, chiefly the Nepali Congress, the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), the National Democratic Party, and the Nepal Sadbhawana (goodwill) Party, are of the national stature as these forces have been capable of meeting the 3 per cent clause of the electoral laws of the land. Small political forces like that of Nepal Labour and Peasants Party also have members in the House of Representatives, the Lower House of the parliament but they are failed to muster 3 per cent of the total votes polled in the general elections and therefore are not treated as the national parties.

The Nepali Congress- a social-democratic since inception, is a mass based political force in Nepal. It is the oldest force that is chiefly instrumental in overthrowing the two undemocratic regimes of the Rana Oligarchy and also the Partyless Panchayat policy of the King. It has own a workable majority in the 1991 elections constituting as much as 56.2 per cent seats in the parliament. But, when the party went for a snap polls in 1994, mainly owing to internal dissention, it failed to secure majority of seats. As a consequence, party's stature got changed from the ruling to an opposition in the legislature. Notwithstanding, the party has as much as 44.5 per cent of the seats in the 265 bicameral legislature and, following a vertical split in the UML, it is in an advantageous position and is heading the coalition government.

On the other hand, the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) born in 1991, is a strong cadre based political force. It is composed of the liberal and conservative elements, in regard to achieving the communist ideology in the Kingdom, and therefore, it behaves marginally<sup>30</sup> which is, time and again, reflected in its programmes and actions. This party had just 36.0 per cent of seats in the 1991 and now it enjoys as many as 40.4 per cent of seats in the parliament and is a partner in the coalition government with the Nepali Congress.

The NDP is a political force mainly composed of the stalwarts of the ancient Partyless Panchayat regime, headed by the King. Before 1990, the leaders of this political party were the governing elite and were vehemently

opposed to, even practicing coercive measures, the elements that were against the Panchayat regime. It had, only 1.5 per cent strength, in 1991, in the 265 member parliament and was, then, considered as the rejected party by the electorate. But, after 4 years later, it now enjoys 8.7 per cent of seats in 1994 houses of the parliament. With this party's cooperation, all other revolutionary parties including NC and UML, either headed were led the coalition governments.

The NSP also was formally came into existence after the return of the democracy in 1990 though it was working as a political group even during the Panchayat regime as it had participated itself in the political process of the partyless polity. This regional-cum-ethnic party was the 4th largest party in the 1991 parliament and had as much as 2.6 per cent strength in 265 member houses. But it lost its ground and reduced to 1.1 per cent in the houses of the parliament after the 1994 elections.

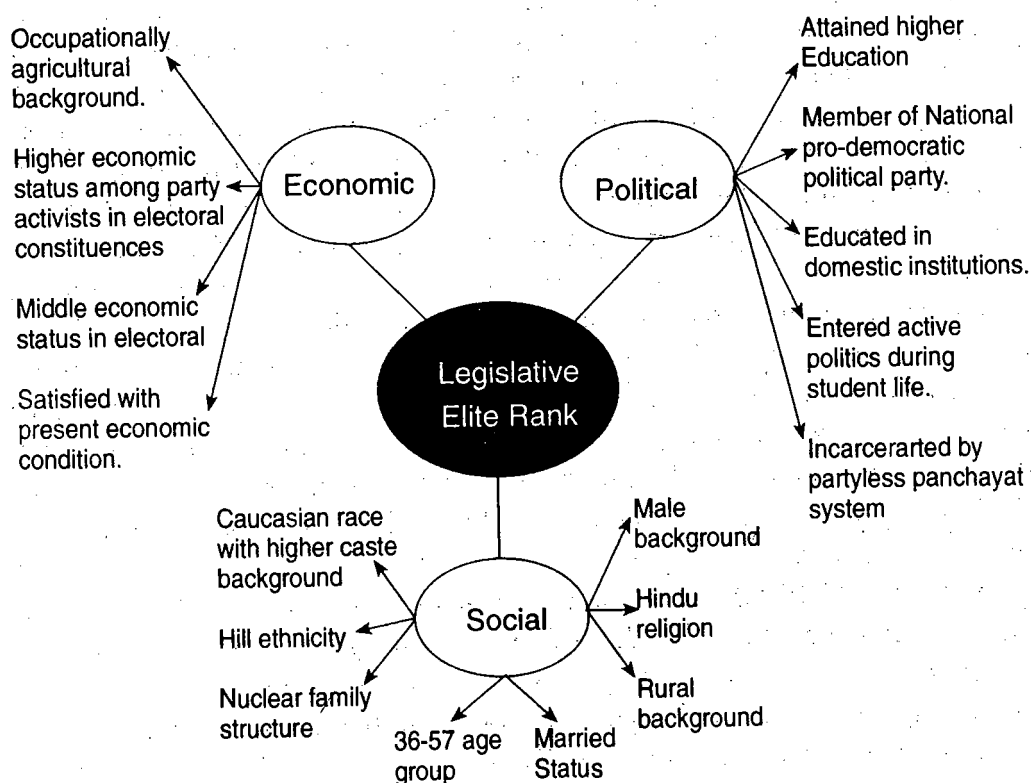
It is significant to reveal here that ethno-racially, the core leadership of all these political parties, are over represented by the Caucasians and yet higher caste personalities such as Bahuns and Chhetries.

The parliament witnesses that educational institutions of the Kingdom are playing role of major agencies to politically socialised young people to join politics, as majority of its members were students when they, at first, entered in an active politics of society. Those who were involved in the farming job were negligible. Nevertheless, it is found that those who were working in some Governmental or Non-governmental organisations constitute the 2nd largest percentage i.e. as many as 27.5 per cent. It is indeed significant to note that the parliament is overwhelmingly dominated by the graduate and above graduate legislators. Majority of these legislative elite are found inspired by the agencies of the secondary social group. Nevertheless, the elite who are inspired by the agencies of the primary social group also constitute a large share of percentage i.e. as much as much 42.3 per cent. The national parliament continues, as it witnessed as many as 78.9 per cent in 1991, to be dominated by the jail goers for the restoration of multiparty democracy in Nepal.

Except the NDP-which is composed of the ruling elite of the deposed Partyless Panchayat System that ruled the country for 30 years from 1960 to 1990, all other political parties of the national stature had relentlessly worked against the ancienne regime. In course of their arduous fight, many of their workers suffered economically and also physically, as they were incarcerated and their properties were confiscated. After the restoration of democracy, these political forces have become the ruling parties one time or other and have enhanced their socio-economic standing. Now the power and authority are more or less attached to them. Nevertheless, these powerful

parties, of which core leadership is overwhelmingly dominated by the political sufferers,<sup>31</sup> as *quid pro quo*, distribute legislative tickets to those activists of the party who were incarcerated under Partyless Panchayat period. And, sovereign electorates, have been found rewarding the politically imprisoned personalities in the elections for their sacrifices and arduous struggle against the autocratic regime in the Kingdom. In other words, it can be said that to be the member of the political sufferer class, in the post-democracy era, is an advantage or politically higher status in the political domain of society. Also according to the data, 67.2 per cent elite had a background of being suffered or incarcerated for their active participation to overthrow the ancient regime of the Kingdom. Nevertheless, the percentage of the non-incarcerated elite has been enhanced as compared to the last parliament in which it was as much as 21.1 per cent only.

**Figure 4: Determinants for Legislative Elite Rank in the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal**



*Source: Based on the findings of the study.*

## Notes

1. This article was prepared during author's research stay in the Federal Republic of Germany, from June 1998 to May 1999, under Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung's *Special George Forster Post-Doctoral Fellowship*.
2. Shah Kings of modern Nepal- Chhetri by caste, trace their ancestral line to the Solar and Lunar Kings of Chitaur Garh who fled to the Gorkha following the Muslim invasion into their state in the 14th Century.
3. Chhetri by caste, the Ranas of Nepal, also have social root in the Chitaur Garh in the family of one of the Solar clan Kings.
4. Shah Kings in Nepal are addressed as *Sri* 5 while Rana Prime Ministers were addressed as *Sri* 3. It may be noteworthy here that *Sri* is a word which is generally used before the name of Hindus in order to pay or show one's respect. For an ordinary being, only one *Sri* has been practiced so far.
5. According to the 1990 constitution, the sovereignty of Nepal is vested in the Nepalese people. Please see *Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 2047 and Electoral Laws*, (Legal Research Associates: Kathmandu), p. 2.
6. Of the total 60 members, 35 including at least 3 women, are elected by the House of Representatives under the system of Proportional Representation by means of a single transferable vote while 15 other members, at the ratio of 3 members from each Development Region (There are 5 Development Regions: Eastern Development Region, Central Development Region, Western Development Region, Mid-Western Development Region and far-Western Development Region), are elected through single transferable vote by an electoral college that consisted of Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the VDC and Town Committees and the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and the members of the DDC. Each Development Region has its own electoral college. The rest 10 members are directly nominated by the King.
7. Suresh C. Chalise, *Sociology of the Legislative Elite in a Developing Society: an empirical study based on the members of the first Parliament of the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal after the 1990 people's revolution*, (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Nepal Foundation for Advance Studies, Kathmandu, 1995), pp. 53-57.
8. *The Constitution of Nepal, 1990*, (Kathmandu: HMG Law and Justice Ministry, Law Book Management Association, 1990), p. 3.
9. *Population Census-1991, Social Characteristics Tables*, (Vol. 1, Part VII, His Majesty's Government of Nepal, CBS; 1993) p. 1

10. It is significant to note that members of this Mongolian racial stock posses Hindu names.
11. *Mundhum* as a separate religion was also reported in an unpublished Ph.D. Thesis by S.C. Chalise, opcit. P. 114. At bottom, *Mundhum* is a religious text to be recited during social rituals, particularly among *Kiranti* ethnic groups, in eastern Nepal. However, it is explored that local variations of Limbu mundhum include muddum among Mewahang-Rai and muntum among Yakha tribe. See for details Harka Gurung, *Nepal: social demography and expressions*, (New Era, Kathmandu, 1998), p. 104.
12. The members of the Nepali Congress, National Democratic Party and Nepal Sadbhawana Party, have no ambiguity in declaring themselves as the followers of Hindus religion. But, specifically in the case of the members of the Communist Parties, it is found that they are either divided or express conflicting views on the question of their religion. For example; the founder General Secretary of Communist Party Mr Chandra Prakash Mainali says he believes in Hindu Culture, *Sanskritiy*, not in religion. The riddle is that the element of religion can hardly be excluded from Culture. Similarly, the President of Communist Party (UML) Mr Manmohan Adhikary claims to be Hindu, Mrs Sahana Pradhan- by caste a Newar, President of CPN (Marxist and Leninist) also claims to be Hindu, Mr Narayan Man Bijukchhe- Newar, president of NLP Party is also a follower of Hindu religion. Mr Hiranaya Lal Shreshta- Newar by caste though claims to be believer of humanism, nevertheless, confesses that his family is follower of Hindu religion. Furthermore, interestingly, those who claim to be Atheist also place themselves in some of the caste groups and ironically, the caste itself is the byproduct of the social stratification in the Hindu religion.
13. This violent class struggle or war, which was launched in 1996 by the Maoists in Nepal, still continues.
14. Many scholars in Nepal still consider the members of this Mongolian racial stock as the tribals. In earlier days, people of this stock, might be called a tribal in view of their socio-economic and educational status but it would be unscientific to call or regard them now as a tribal, as their life style has considerably been modernised. Besides, they are actively participating in social, economic political and cultural domains of the Nepalese society.
15. This category of response includes, teaching, governmental and non-governmental job of spouses, private legal practice, house renting, economic support from respective political parties and pension from previous Governmental or Private job.

16. The material obtained on the economic status, at bottom, comes from the elite respondent themselves and, as it is still regarded as valuable for revolutionary elite of 1990 to have economically poor class or status- as they are being alleged for corruption in view of their relatively comfortable economic life introduced by their privileged status in society, it may well be that a few of them might have given their economic status as lower.
17. The entire Kingdom of Nepal, as per 1990 constitution, has been divided into 75 districts as administrative units and these districts have further been split into 205 electoral constituencies. For details see, *Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 2047 and Electoral Laws*, (Legal Research Associates, Kathmandu), p. 85-86.
18. Ibid. p. 68.
19. According to the electoral law of Nepal, every political party requires atleast 3 per cent of the total votes polled in the general elections, to be recognised as the national party. For details, see, Suresh C. Chalise, *Sociology of the Legislative Elite in a Developing Society*, (FES and NEFAS, Kathmandu, 1995). p. 29.
20. The Communist Party of Nepal (UML) has almost vertically and yet formally been splitted on 5th of March 1998 after 46 of parliament members led by Mr Bam Dev Gautam registered an application for their separate identity as the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist and Leninist) at the parliament secretariate. But this splinter party has not been recognised as the national party by the Election Commission, as it has not yet the privilege of meeting the 3 percent clause of the electoral law. And, therefore, in this study the members of CPN (ML) are not separately dealt.
21. Unified after 1991 general elections, this party does have two arch rival personalities Mr SB Thapa and Mr LB Chand. Emulation, between the two, has been since the growth of the Partyless Panchayat politics. The reasons for their rivalry have partly been for their political ambition hedged with caste stereotype and partly due to their attitude towards politics of the contemporary Nepalese society. Mr Chand, according to *Gorkhapatra* of December 22, 1998, opened National Democratic Party (consolidation) on 21 December and later that forum was changed into the NDP (Chand) as it declared its central committee headed by Mr. Rajeshor Devkota. This party, according to *Kantipur Weekly* dated January 17, 1999, was also officially recognised by the secretariate of parliament on 16th of January 1999 but again was also not recognised by the Election Commission on the same ground that was applied in the case of CPN (ML). In view of this, as was done in the case of CPN



- (ML), the members of both the factions of the NDP are not dealt separately.
22. *Others* category of response is to denote the two members, Mr Pari Thapa and Mr Nav Raj Subedi, who show their allegiance to some extreme left force in Nepal.
  23. This category consists 2 or 3.3 per cent illiterate legislative members.
  24. This category includes 1 or 0.5 per cent illiterate member.
  25. This category constitutes 3 or 1.1 per cent elite in 265 member parliament.
  26. People participated in the periodic national and local elections. They also actively participated in the *national referendum* of 1980 and 45.8% adult citizen then had boldly exercised their franchise against the Partyless Panchayat system. Even after the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, people are found indulged in all sorts of politics from unconstitutional Maoist People's War and revival of the deposed Partyless Panchayat system to the main stream of the present multiparty democratic process. In other words, people, nevertheless, continuously be that of pro-establishment or anti-establishment nature of politics, are taking part in the political process of the Kingdom.
  27. *Primary Social group* includes those family members/relatives and peer groups of the respondent elite, who already are involved in politics of society, while the *Secondary social group* comprises of political leaders, ideology followed by political party, exploitation by landlord in respondent's village, anti-British movement by nextdoor Indian people, impact of 1979 students movement, inner feeling to fight against injustice and exploitation in society.
  28. This category of elite also constitutes the King's 10 nominees to 16.7 per cent of the 60 members in the National Council.
  29. This category of elite consists of the Mongolians from hill groups and Tribals (Tharus) from tarai community.
  30. On the one hand, the CPN (UML) regards the place or the monarchy as the political protector of feudalism and imperialism while on the other hand, it accepts the supremacy of the 1990 constitution, in which the monarchy or His Majesty the King, is an integral part of the parliament. It is stated in the Article 44 of the 1990 Constitution. Please also see, *The Parliament of Nepal: an overview*, (Parliament Secretariat's Offset Press, Kathmandu, 1999) p. 3.
  31. In 1991, the Political Sufferer's Committee was formed with a view to rehabilitate the persons who were incarcerated or exiled during Partyless Panchayat Polity. This Committee has been headed by the former Prime Minister and President of the Nepali Congress Party Mr K.P. Bhattarai who himself had suffered imprisonment as many as 14 years.

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# **THE IMPLICIT MODE OF DOMINATION IN NEPAL: FATALISM AND BAHUNISM AS THE MAIN CAUSES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT**

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## **Introduction**

What are the main causes of underdevelopment of Nepal? Why has it been said that most foreign aid has failed? Dor Bahadur Bista attempts in his book *Fatalism and Development* to identify key factors in Nepali society that are obstructing and wasting its effort to develop (Bista 1991: 1)<sup>1</sup>. He indicates the fatalistic caste hierarchy and its values as the root causes of the problem, and proposes a notion of 'Bahunism (Brahmanism)'<sup>2</sup> as a psychopolitical imposition of the Nepalese version of Indian Vedic tradition. The values and behaviour are so implicit and deeply ingrained in the mentality and lifestyle of dominant caste groups that he predicts the shock which the group will have from his assertions (8). In fact his book has provoked many controversies inside and outside Nepal since its publication<sup>3</sup>.

We can compare Bista's work with that of Weber<sup>4</sup>, who stressed the importance of 'the protestant ethic' as a guiding force in the evolution of modern capitalism (Weber 1930). Weber proposed 'the spirit of capitalism' as a by-product of the religious ethic of Calvinism. By contrast Bista stresses the importance of fatalism as a root cause of the obstacles of development. One of the differences between them is that Bista seems to have the intention to change the society, maintaining the reality of dominant system and its configurations in order to eradicate them<sup>5</sup>.

Bista's study is 'based on observations over thirty years on Nepal's attempt to develop and respond to change' (6). He also provides a historical overview from the prehistorical period to the present. He asserts the necessity of analytic generalization to study the dominant system of such a heterogeneous and complex society as Nepal (7). Unlike the major efforts of other scholars to understand the mechanism of the underdevelopment of Nepal which are focused on politico-economic aspects<sup>6</sup>, he looks into the socio-cultural, psycho-social and religious values which the dominant high caste group have imposed upon the national society (8).

This book is the critical examination of his own society and almost the first attempt by an academically trained insider of Nepal to diagnose her ills<sup>7</sup>. He 'can say things which no outsider could say' (Macfarlane 1994: 115). It is also, however, an extremely difficult journey for him 'just like walking on a thin edge, frequently changing sides from being an object to be studied to being an outsider who studies at the same time' (8). He is the only person who dared start and has completed at least the first stage of this challenging journey.

Although many scholars examined the Bista's book, it seems nobody has succeeded in extracting and analyzing its central notions precisely. Macfarlane (1994) argues for it and tries to sort out the contradictions of Bista's but his proposed perspective can not solve this issue completely. Pahari (1992) argues against it and used the contradictions just to deny Bista's argument. Other papers, whether they are for or against it, remain partial.

What I should do at first is, therefore, elaborate and analyze the central notions of Bista, in comparison with some most relevant theories such as 'Sanskritization' and Weber's scheme of 'protestantism and capitalism'.

In this paper, I will offer a critical review of the book in order to clarify the implicit mode of domination in Nepal which obstructs the process of development. Although Bista extracts a cluster of cultural elements and struggles for theoretical generalization, many confusions and contradictions are found in his arguments. Considering these problems, I will propose a new perspective from which we can solve and reintegrate them. For that purpose I will describe 'ideal types' as the essence of his assertion.

First, the main components and the origin of Bahunism will be examined. Second, we will explore the mechanism of the formation of hegemony. Examining the concept of Sanskritization, we will demonstrate the dual mode of the dominant system in Nepal. The interaction between the Vedic tradition and the indigenous tradition will also be mentioned. Third, we examine the negative consequences of Fatalism and Bahunism on the development of Nepal in comparison with Weber's scheme of Protestantism and capitalism. We will then consider the prospects for the development of Nepal.

Through these examinations, I think I have almost succeeded to outline and analyze Bista's central notion, although I have not completed. As I mentioned in the paper, we should examine other key ideas more and more such as class, ethnicity, resistance to Bahunism, hegemony, nation-state, roles of King, the 'development'.

### **Bahunism and its Configurations**

According to Bista, Bahunism is 'the syndrome of cultural configurations along with the principles of caste system' (3) and, beyond Vedic traditions, it 'heavily emphasizes fatalism [... and] its ... karmic determination, from which has developed the social organization of the varna or caste system (58).

As the components of this 'syndrome of cultural configurations', 'there are a cluster of socio-cultural elements ... that play a very important negative role in Nepal's attempt at change' (6). Although he describes many elements, it is not clear what the key elements are and their causal relationships. We try to resolve this issue.

We start by examining three socio-cultural institutions, i.e. *chakari*, *afno manchhe* and the caste system, and two socio-psychological principles, fatalism and paternal dependency, which he highlights as crucial ones. These elements comprise a system, in Bista's word, a fatalistic hierarchy. He asserts that all of the elements derive from the Indian Vedic tradition, although they are modified in the historical and social circumstances in Nepal. Later we examine the characteristics of the Vedic tradition as the origin of the five elements.

**Chakari:** One of the three socio-cultural institutions is called *chakari*, which originally means 'to wait upon, to serve, to appease, or to seek favour from a god'(89). The origin of *chakari* lies in the Hindu ritual practices of obeisance, which were secularized and 'extended to the governing classes and then to all in certain positions of power' as a behaviour of sycophancy (5). Thus *chakari* is a vertical 'patron-client' relationship (Macfarlane 1994: 118).

As a social activity, its most common form is in simply being close to or in the presence of the person whose favour is desired. Instead of efficient fulfillment of duties and obligations, persistence in *chakari* is seen as merit, and with enough merit favours may be granted. It is a passive form of instrumental behaviour whose object is to demonstrate dependency, with the aim of eventually eliciting the favour of the person depended upon (5).

The most important feature of this *chakari* system in Nepal is that it was an officially introduced and institutionalized system during the period of Rana

despotism (1846-1951) (90). The purpose was to control potential rivals (90, 102). Ranas could collect information about their rivals and also observe them physically (90-91). The hours set aside for this purpose were known as the *chakari* hours (90). During the Rana days people bragged about their identity of being a *chakariwala* (one who does *chakari*) (Bista 1989: 184). *Chakari* also has a function to provide 'opportunities for those at lower levels of the hierarchy to express their ideas and air their grievances' (91). On the other hand *chakari* could easily take the form of a bribe or other form of corruption (92). Moreover it tends to encourage endless gossip and back-biting (Macfarlane 1994: 118).

Although this *chakari* was formally abolished with the end of the Ranas, the system and its tendency still remains an important part of social life, and is evident at all levels of government' (90). It is 'spreading throughout the country with the expansion of hierarchical central and local government' (Bista 1989: 184).

In this way, originally derived from the Hindu ritual traditions, *chakari* is modified and prevails as a secularized institution all over Nepal supported by her social hierarchy and psychological dependency. *Chakari* could be transformed into another social institution when the status differential is bridged, called *afno manchhe* (91).

**Afno Manchhe (one's own people):** *Afno manchhe* means one's own people in Nepalese and it is, according to Bista, 'the term used to designate one's inner circle of associates - it ... refers to those who can be approached whenever need arises' (98). This is a horizontal dependent relationship and complements *Chakari*. 'Everything inside the circle is predictable and manipulable' (Bista 1989: 178). It is a manifestation of collectivism (4).

Nepali makes a strong distinction between us and them. People who do not belong to one's own inner circle are perceived as being non-persons and there is no real concern over what happens to such unrelated individuals. Time and effort is exhausted in taking care of one's own people so that there is little energy or inclination left to be concerned about non-persons (97).

The strength or weakness of anyone is measured in terms of the quality and quantity of the circle the person is part of (98). *Afno manchhe* has the potential of being constructively used but it can also function as an amoral collectivism leading to negative consequences like exclusionary tendencies,

factionalism, failures in cooperation and corruption (4). We may add the absence of the concept of 'public', as opposed to 'private', as one of its consequences. The circles of *Afno manchhe* are based on kinship, ethnicity, caste, class, profession, residential area and other social connections (Bista 1989: 178).

We then examine one of the bases of *afno manchhe*, and the most influential institution, namely the caste system.

**Caste System:** Caste is a system of ideas and values (Dumont 1980: 35). It is a principle and also an institution. It is a part of religion and also a hierarchic system of social relations such as division of labour, regulation of marriage and rules concerning contact and food, based on the notion of purity and impurity.

In Nepal it was legalized for the entire country in the Code of 1854 by the Rana regime (58). The Code is called *Mulki Ain* and presents 'a four-fold classification of society in which all castes and ethnic groups of Nepal were subsumed. This social universe is paraphrased as *car varna chattis jat* (four varnas and thirty-six castes)' (Sharma 1978: 4). The names of the four varnas and the order of the hierarchy are as follows:

1. *Tagadhari* = Castes wearing the sacred thread; all the Hindu high-caste consisting of the Brahmins, Thakuris and Chhetris.
2. *Matwali* = Alcohol-drinking castes; all the tribal groups are gathered [included] in this class.
3. *Pani na calne choi chito halnu naparne* = Low service castes whose touch is not defiling, but from whom water cannot be accepted by higher castes.
4. *Pani na calne choi chito halnu parne* = Untouchable castes (ibid.: 4).

This model can be considered as extended to and imposed on the ethnic groups by the high caste Hindus (ibid.: 4). Although this systematized imposition continued for only about 100 years until caste was legally abolished in 1963, it has extensively pervaded all ethnic groups and has transformed society. It is so influential that it tends, in Bista's words, 'to be perceived as an inevitable condition for a legitimate Hindu kingdom' (153)<sup>8</sup>. Moreover 'there is a danger of the development of a new secularized caste system, where the socially mobile consolidate their position by blocking out their competitors or those closely behind them' (156).

The caste system has developed from fatalism (58) and vice versa. We now examine fatalism, which Bista emphasizes as the most deep-rooted socio-psychological principle.



**Fatalism:** According to the Vedic tradition, fate (*bhagya*) is written on one's forehead by the god called *Bhavi* who comes on the sixth night after birth (77). Fatalism is an absolute belief:

that one has no personal control over one's life circumstances, which are determined through a divine or powerful external agency. This deep belief in fatalism has had a devastating effect on the work ethic and achievement motivation (77-81), and through these on the Nepali response to development. It has consequences on the sense of time (84, 135), and in particular such things as the concept of planning (85), orientation to the future (85), sense of causality (79), human dignity and punctuality (86) (4, referential pages added).

He also mentioned other negative consequences on purposeful problem-solving (77), dignity in labour (79), responsibility (80, 82, 96, 146), productivity (2), personal competence (82), morality to keep contractual relations (83), formal legal development (87), pragmatic thought (137), charity (81, 135), idealism (137) and innovation to change (135, 150).

Fatalism is connected to dependency, robbing the people of personal control and responsibility (4, 146).

**Paternal Dependency:** The family structure and childhood socialization of the Bahuns develop a continuing superordinate and subordinate relationship between father and son. Dependence is more upon the father than mother, thus 'whenever Nepalis receive good treatment from anyone and feel comfortable they begin to identify that individual with a father figure' (89). This dependency on the father and other substitute father figures, i.e. vertical and paternal dependency, parallels the caste system but is also somewhat separate from it. The potential for father substitution then extends out of the family and into the mainstream of society. In Nepal, this relationship outside the family has been institutionalized as *chakari* (89).

**Vedic Traditions:** Hindu theological ideas such as *dharma*<sup>9</sup>, *karma*<sup>10</sup> and *maya*<sup>11</sup> are woven into the caste system. In fact the five elements we have examined are derived from Indian Vedic traditions. Here we examine Indian Vedic traditions as the origin of the elements. We also examine how the traditions have been modified through the process of introduction and diffusion to Nepal in the next section.

According to Bista, the characteristics of Vedic tradition are: dislike of manual labour, the emphasis on erudition and ritual as the only important things (79), the appreciation of debate and argument as respected activities (136), a hierarchical view of the world, the belief in fatalism arising from the idea of dharma, the chakari system arising from the seeking of favour from a god, strong distinctions between 'us' and 'them' in *afno manchhe*, absence of an internalized morality and responsibility, being self-righteous but without an ability to be self-critical (68), no plans for the future and no interest in historical studies until a few decades ago (85), no savings resulting in no investment (85), a restricted sense of competence (82), no serious acceptance of any form of contractual relations (83) and little formal legal development outside of religious texts (87).

Thus we may say that Vedic traditions are the fundamental source of the five elements. Attached is a chart which I have drawn to demonstrate the relationships of each element. (See Figure 1: The Vedic Traditions and Bahunism). There I have made a distinction between three types of relationships, i.e. those institutionalized by Ranas, those reinforced by dominant groups and those mutually reinforced.

### **Mechanism of the Formation of Hegemony**

We have examined the five inter-acting elements of Bahunism and their origin. Moreover we have examined the process of formulation and institutionalization of each element. This does not, however, clarify the whole process of the formulation of Bahunism. To understand the mode of domination, we need to demonstrate the more dynamic mechanism of the formation of the system in addition to static analysis.

Here, first, we examine the concept of Sanskritization<sup>12</sup> which explains the process of the acceptance of a value system and of social mobility within the caste hierarchy. We explore its effectiveness and limitations in the context of Nepal. We, then, try to outline an ideal type of the formation of domination of Nepal.

Sanskritization denotes mainly: adoption by the lower castes of new values and the ways of life which are said to belong to members of the so-called upper castes, expression of these new values and ideals in *Veda*, i.e. theological and scholarly literature written in the Sanskrit language, and a rise in status within the caste hierarchy (Gurung 1988: 43).

In Nepal, Sanskritization has occurred in various regions and many anthropologists have reported this social phenomenon (Fürer-Haimendorf 1966, Bista 1971, Jones 1976, Gurung 1988, Cox 1989, Skar 1995). Their studies are confined within the Sanskritization of relatively lower caste groups. In the case of Nepal, however, the more influential fact is that not

the lower caste groups but the rulers themselves have adopted Sanskritization and imposed Bahunism upon other ethnic groups.

The Licchavis, the first historical rulers of Nepal, styled themselves *Chhetri* (*Kshatriyas*) and maintained Bahuns from India as their personal priests (35). In various regions the ruling and upper classes of Khas<sup>13</sup>, Magar and Newar took the title of Chhetri to legitimize their position within the society (36). The last and the most influential incident was when the then despot of the country, a Khas, adopted the title of Rana, claiming fictitious ancestry of Rajput origin from India (37). He legalized the Nepalese version of caste hierarchy and infused Bahunism into the society from the top, as mentioned already.

On the process of Sanskritization, the group which initiated the ruling elites were priest Bahuns. To establish their social and economic status, the priest Bahuns were willing to conduct rituals for the initiation and demanded constantly a high status and fee (36). That is because most of the Bahuns were originally immigrants from India escaping from the hostile invasions of the Muslims, and thus dependent on the rulers (3, 38-39). Moreover there are non-priest Bahuns who are the children of Bahun fathers and indigenous mothers. They have gradually established a high status utilizing their educational and economic advantage, and have infused fatalism and hierarchic caste principles into local ethnic life (38).

To sum up, there are two kinds of dominant groups which participated in the Sanskritization in Nepal. The first is the ruling class which mainly consists of Ranas and Chhetris, and they have utilized Priest Bahuns and Vedic notions for the legitimization of upward mobilization and domination. The second are the immigrant Bahuns and their descendants, which consist of priest Bahuns and non-priest Bahuns, although each Bahun has a different approach to the establishment of social and economic status. The indigenous groups have had Vedic traditions imposed upon them, especially Bahunism, by two different dominant groups. In this sense they have been subjected to dual modes of domination.<sup>14</sup> (See Figure 2: The Formation of Domination).

Unlike India where it took a very long time for Vedic traditions to infuse into the grass roots; Bahunism, the modified Vedic traditions, has been imposed upon the people within quite a short time in Nepal. The caste hierarchy and fatalism have not been formed historically and 'naturally', but have been artificially and politically introduced. Usually Sanskritization is 'the mobility associated with Sanskritization [which] results only in positional changes in the system and does not lead to any structural change' (Srinivas 1966: 7). In the case of Nepal, however, the caste hierarchy was not established but the ruling class has introduced it through the process of

its Sanskritization. Thus Sanskritization in Nepal was not only within the social hierarchical system but was also an attempt to establish a new social structure for a powerful regime. In India Sanskritization had been greatly accelerated by the presence of the British regime, although the change was only a quantitative one (Srinivas 1962: 56). During the same period in Nepal, by contrast, the Ranas, in order to strengthen the political power to oppose the British regime, took an isolationist policy and dared to further a Sanskritization which was qualitatively different from previous ones. Thus there exists an ideological preponderance of Bahunism and Vedic traditions as the ideas of the dominant groups. We may call it a 'hegemony' in Gramsci's usage (1992).

Although we have examined here Sanskritization of and by dominant groups, we cannot ignore the Sanskritization of the lower classes. In these cases Vedic traditions were not imposed but were spontaneously accepted and emulated in order to acquire socially better positions. They tried to erase their own traditions and to behave like the higher caste. Some almost transformed their identities to socially higher ones (Gurung 1988), while others only use Vedic norms politically and have not compromised their traditional identity (Cox 1989).

Thus, Bahunism and Vedic traditions have been more or less internalized among the indigenous people through imposition and spontaneous mimesis. Sometimes they are so deeply internalized among the indigenous people that they can not realize that they are a part of the mode of domination. In the Myagdhi district, the western hills of Nepal, for example, Pun Magar people, an indigenous group, are still eager to establish Hindu religious monuments and to invite Bahuns to religious rituals. The Pun Magar have been deeply influenced by Bahunism and they have lost even their own language. We can see another example in the eastern hills. According to Caplan, the community leaders of Limbu perceive their own practices such as drinking, meat-eating, hospitality, marriage practices and funerary customs negatively, under the influence of high caste Hindu (1991: 316). In this way, the ideological preponderance of Bahunism and the Vedic traditions forms implicit mode of domination.

In addition to the above analysis, we examine here the formation and infusion of Bahunism from different analytic angles. Bista ascribes the origin of Bahunism to Vedic traditions, which have been modified by dominant groups in order to rationalize and strengthen their status. The conceptual framework of Sanskritization seems to be only a one-way process but, as Srinivas, the originator of this concept, asserts, Sanskritization is 'a two-way process though the local cultures seem to have received more than they have given' (Srinivas 1962: 59). Bista also points

out the interface and dynamism between the Vedic traditions and the indigenous traditions. For example, he reported a case in which the Bahuns were much influenced by the independent-natured Limbu in the far east (51). However he does not clarify the dialectical relationships between the Vedic traditions and the indigenous traditions. As a consequence, 'it is not clear how much of the phenomenon of fatalism/hierarchy is due to Bahunism' (Macfarlane 1994: 125). I can not clarify this subject here in detail but, I would like to suggest a dialectical model of the Vedic traditions and the indigenous traditions in the context of Bahunism. (See Figure 3: The Vedic and Indigenous Traditions).

Moreover, Bista does not clarify the distinction between caste, class and ethnicity (Dahal 1990: 91) and the boundary between 'dominant groups' and dominated remains vague. Caste and class seem to be overlapping and interpenetrating, because the dominant class has utilized the notion of caste for their legitimation, as we have seen. However the subject of the discrimination of caste, class and ethnicity still remains to be clarified.

### **Fatalism and Underdevelopment, and Development**

We have already examined Bahunism and some parts of its negative consequences. The causal relationship between fatalism and underdevelopment is, however, fragmentary and not necessarily clear. Here I will try to outline the ideal type of the relationship, comparing this with the ideal type of Weber, the relationship between Protestantism and Capitalism.

As the key element to understand the underdevelopment of Nepal, Bista emphasizes 'the absence of work ethic and achievement motivation'. His causal relationship is that fatalism causes the absence of work ethic and achievement motivation, then this causes underdevelopment, although he also mentioned that the other four elements also affect the absence (4, 77-81).

Here we describe the ideal type of fatalism-underdevelopment relationship compared with Weber's scheme. (See Figure 4: The Schemes of Weber and Bista). Although Bista emphasizes the unilinear relations of fatalism -> absence of work ethic and motivation -> underdevelopment; as in the scheme of Weber, there are other factors which affect the process. Fatalism itself is a necessary precondition, but not a 'sufficient condition' of underdevelopment in the context of Nepal. Bista, however, tends to overestimate, especially in the context of underdevelopment, the value system.

As a factor of 'Y', the monopolization by dominant groups should be included. This monopoly covers government<sup>15</sup>, the education sector<sup>16</sup>, mass

communications and foreign aid in Nepal (154-155). Thus this monopoly is one of the most crucial elements working against development. (See Figure 5: Scheme of Underdevelopment). As factors of 'Y', geographical and demographic facts, international politico-economic context are also indispensable to understand the underdevelopment of Nepal (Macfarlane 1994: 125).

We also should not forget the reverse causal relations of the Bahunism and development. The international interest of the donors and the direct intervention of powers in the formulation and execution of key development projects reinforce the Nepali tendency to perceive machinations of fate (140). Moreover, massive foreign aid has helped to mask widespread economic abuse and corruption (147). Therefore, aid and projects for development have reinforced a sense of powerlessness and, as a consequence, reinforced hierarchic fatalism.

Even though Bista states that 'we do not yet have an alternative model which would work effectively with the given background of our social structure, social hierarchy and value system (Bista 1989: 182), his remarks on development are important in considering the development policy and strategy of Nepal.

His first policy seems to be to expose the implicit modes of domination, purge them, and encourage the Nepalese people to 'liberate themselves from the cultural mores' (115). The second is to appreciate and elicit the potential of indigenous people and their traditions instead of Bahunism<sup>17</sup>. According to him, the 'Indigenous people do know the importance of hard work, of endurance, the role of individual effort .... positive qualities of strong cooperative behavior' (151-2). To sum up, he rejects Bahunism and deplores its negative consequences (see Figure 5), and proposes another process for development. (See Figure 6: Scheme for Development).

In order to make this scheme effective, however, we need to answer several questions. What are the potential and roles of the indigenous traditions?<sup>18</sup> How can these traditions be the mainspring for development? What are the factors of 'X' and 'Y'? What are the roles of the nation-state and NGOs for development? What is the 'Development' we aim at?

These questions remain to be answered. However a new movement in the same direction which Bista proposes seems to have already started. The issues of ethnopolitics and ethnodevelopment have become very "hot" since the democratization revolution in 1990 (Bhattachan 1995). The minority groups are struggling to acquire social rights and to construct their identities, attacking very actively the system of domination imposed by the

high caste groups. Bahunism is 'increasingly coming under scrutiny in the post 1990 political transformation' (O'Neill 1994: 46).

## **Conclusion**

My major findings are as follows;

### **1. Configurations of Bahunism**

I extracted the central notions of what Bista called 'cluster of cultural elements' such as Chakari, Afno Manchhe, Caste System, Fatalism, Paternal Dependency and Vedic Traditions, and described as configurations of Bahunism.

### **2. Explicit and implicit modes of domination**

Then I focused on the dynamic process of the formation of domination which Bista has not conceptualized. For this purpose I used the theory of 'Sanskritization'. I found there are dual modes of domination by the dominant groups. With this finding we can solve the most crucial contradiction of Bista. In addition I described another mode of domination which results in implicit mode of domination in the combination of the dual modes above mentioned. I also pointed out the two-way process of the formation of Bahunism between the Vedic traditions and the indigenous traditions.

These findings result in another finding, that is the effectiveness and limitation of the concept of 'Sanskritization' in the context of Nepal.

### **3. Usefulness of comparison between Bista and Weber**

Moreover, I extracted the ideal type of Bista's on fatalism and development in comparison with the scheme of Weber's, although Bista himself does not mentioned the relevance. I also described the scheme of indigenous traditions and development which is not clearly conceptualized by Bista. Based on the schemes above mentioned, I argued the effectiveness and limitations of Bista's ideas.

Bista's book has shed light on the modes of domination and we have demonstrated ideal types of them in this paper examining Bahunism and its configurations which have been infused deeply into Nepalese society. The ruling classes have modified the Indian Vedic traditions into Bahunism and utilized it for their political domination; Bahuns utilized Bahunism for their status; the indigenous people have had Bahunism imposed by the ruling classes and Bahuns, but they also spontaneously accepted it for their upward mobilization. Thus Bahunism has been deeply internalized among the each group of Nepal and it forms explicit and implicit modes of domination.

Bahunism is not a past relic. Although the counterattacks against it had already started since the political upheavals in 1990, it still remains and 'is currently spreading' (6). Both forces, for and against Bahunism, are confronting each other. According to Bista, 'the only way out of the suffering of the transition is to construct the new age as rapidly as possible'(164). But how to do?

He expects the indigenous traditions, as the alternative value system, to replace Bahunism. However, he tends to idealize indigenous group. He says that 'the Nepal population that has remained untouched by Hindu caste principles is Nepal's greatest treasure' (151) and 'Nepal's future hopes lie with them' (163). As we have shown, however, Bahunism has been internalized among the indigenous people and forms explicit and implicit modes of domination. Moreover, as I suggested, Bahunism was shaped not only by the Vedic traditions but also interaction between the Vedic and indigenous traditions.

Bista also tends to idealize Prithivi Narayan Shah, the first king who united Nepal, for his egalitarian policy (162, Metz 1996: 50-51). Moreover, he asserts that 'the King is a positive force for the process of nationhood because all Nepalis share a tendency for paternal dependency' and thus it can contribute to develop the sense of identity and to 'harmonize relations between groups' (162). His vision seems to be a pluralistic society with a great King as the symbol of integration and harmony. However we should examine more closely the historical formation of the Kings and nation-state of Nepal. (See Burghart 1984, English 1985).

Moreover, although we have contrasted the ruling classes and the indigenous people, ruling classes also were originally indigenous people except Bahuns as immigrants from India. 'The indigenous people' were also originally immigrants from somewhere. For example, the Sherpas, which often represent the image of Nepalese people, immigrated from Tibet into Nepal in 1533 (Ortner 1989: 84), and it is not far back in history. Thus the boundary between 'the indigenous people' and immigrants is not self-evident.

Therefore, the way to change the modes of domination is not simple. Bista's basic schemes, which are: Bahunism -> Absence of work ethic and motivation -> underdevelopment, and Indigenous Traditions -> Work ethic and motivation -> Development, are oversimplified and thus we should consider and add other factors in order to construct strategies for development. Moreover, not only the imposition of the Vedic traditions on the indigenous tradition but also the interactions between them should be considered in greater depth. Malla gives us one example of the first person who revolted against Bahunic orthodoxy (1992: 22), and we should examine



more the modes of resistance in the past. Also we should consider further the possibilities of dialogue between the Vedic and indigenous traditions instead of just purging Bahunism. Nepal's future hopes lie, I think, in these directions.

#### Notes:

1. All the sources given below without the name of author and year are from Bista's *Fatalism and Development* (1991).
2. *Bahun is Brahman* (priest) in the Nepali language.
3. Many scholars started to argue for and against Bista's book. It seems some of them welcome it (for example Macfarlane 1994), others attempt to dismiss it (for example Dahal 1990 and Pahari 1992). Pahari declares that the book consists of 'spurious analyses', is of a 'schizophrenic mould' and represents a 'fatal myth' (1992: 55).
4. While Weber is called the 'father of sociology', Bista is called the 'father of anthropology' in Nepal. Bista was the first professor of anthropology in the country. He is popular in Nepal for his book *People of Nepal* (1967). In this book he describes the social and cultural characteristics of each ethnic group.
5. A serious factor is that Bista has been missing since 1994. Nobody knows the reason for his disappearance but it is said that he criticized the dominant caste group too frankly and directly.
6. As a typical example, see Blaikie, P, J. Cameron and D. Seddon: 1980.
7. He is an insider in a double sense. He is not only a member of the nation that he analyses but also belongs to the Chhetri caste, a part of the dominant high caste group that he criticizes (Macfarlane 1994: 115).
8. Nepal is the only country that is defined as a 'Hindu kingdom' by its Constitution.
9. Dharma: religion, duty, ethics, morality, rule, merit and pious acts (29).
10. Karma: literally means action but in everyday use it is thought to be predestined and as something which cannot be altered in any way (77).
11. Maya: illusion. Vedic traditions say that this material world is *maya*.
12. The concept of Sanskritization was introduced by M. N. Sridnivas in 1952 (Srinivas: 1962: 42). Bista uses this concept in his paper (1971), although he does not mention it in this book.
13. Khas were of Indo-European origin and lived in western Nepal., but they have vanished from the ethnographic map of Nepal through the process of Sanskritization (48).

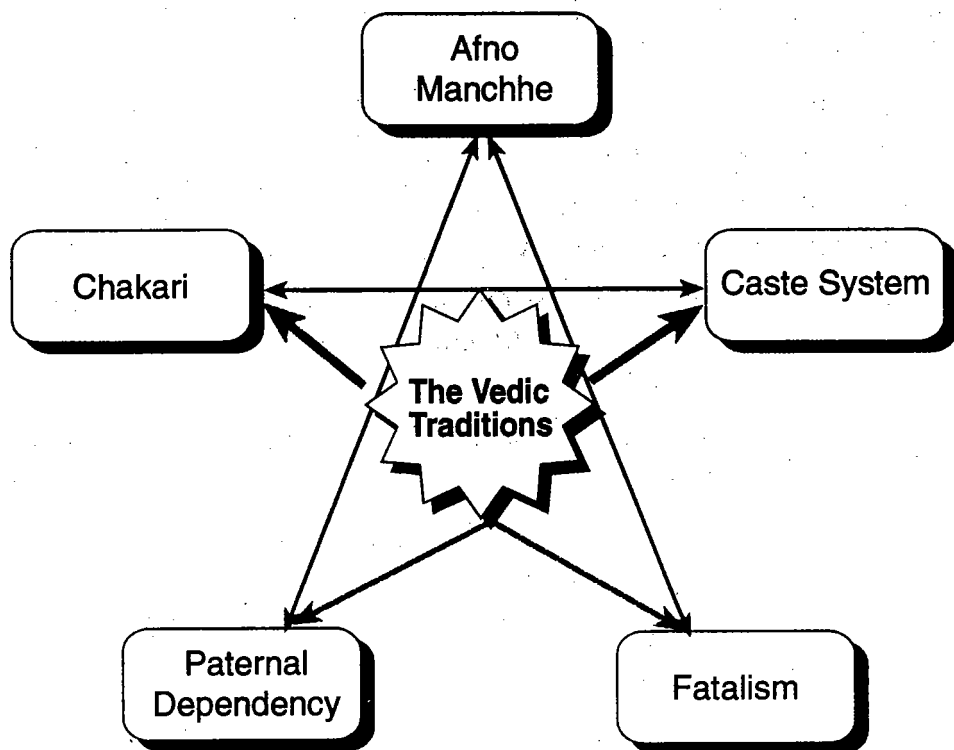
14. Bista himself does not discriminate clearly between these dual modes of dominance. That is why his assertion seems to be contradictory. (Sharma 1991, Macfarlane 1994). We can understand, however, without any contradiction if we discriminate properly between the dual modes.
15. While 22 per cent of the population in 1972 were Bahun, Chhetri and Newar, these groups held almost 93 per cent of all the higher civil service and political posts (Macfarlane 1994: 117).
16. Out of the total enrolment of Tribhuvan University in 1979, the only university at that time, 84 per cent were Bahun, Chhetri and Newar (Malla 1992: 23).
17. Not only purging Bahunism, he also suggests the necessity of the enlightened interpretation of positive Hindu values (Bista 1989: 189).
18. We should note the Weber's study of the religion of India. Although he found striking similarities between Jainism and Protestantism, Jainism could not escape the general consequences of caste society (Gellner 1982: 534-5).

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**Figure 1: The Vedic Traditions and Bahunism**

- Institutionalized by Ranas
- Reinforced by Dominant Groups
- Mutually reinforced

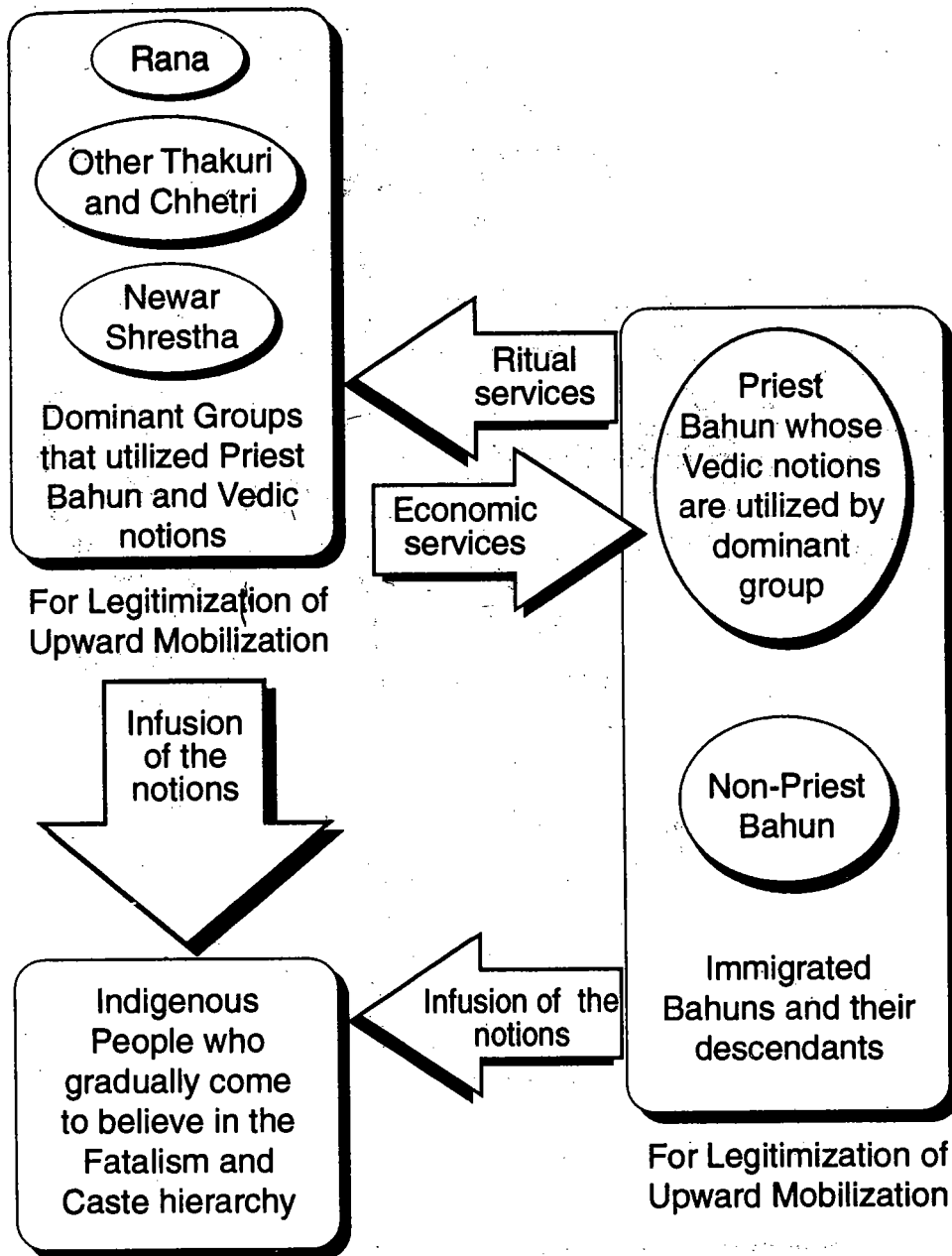
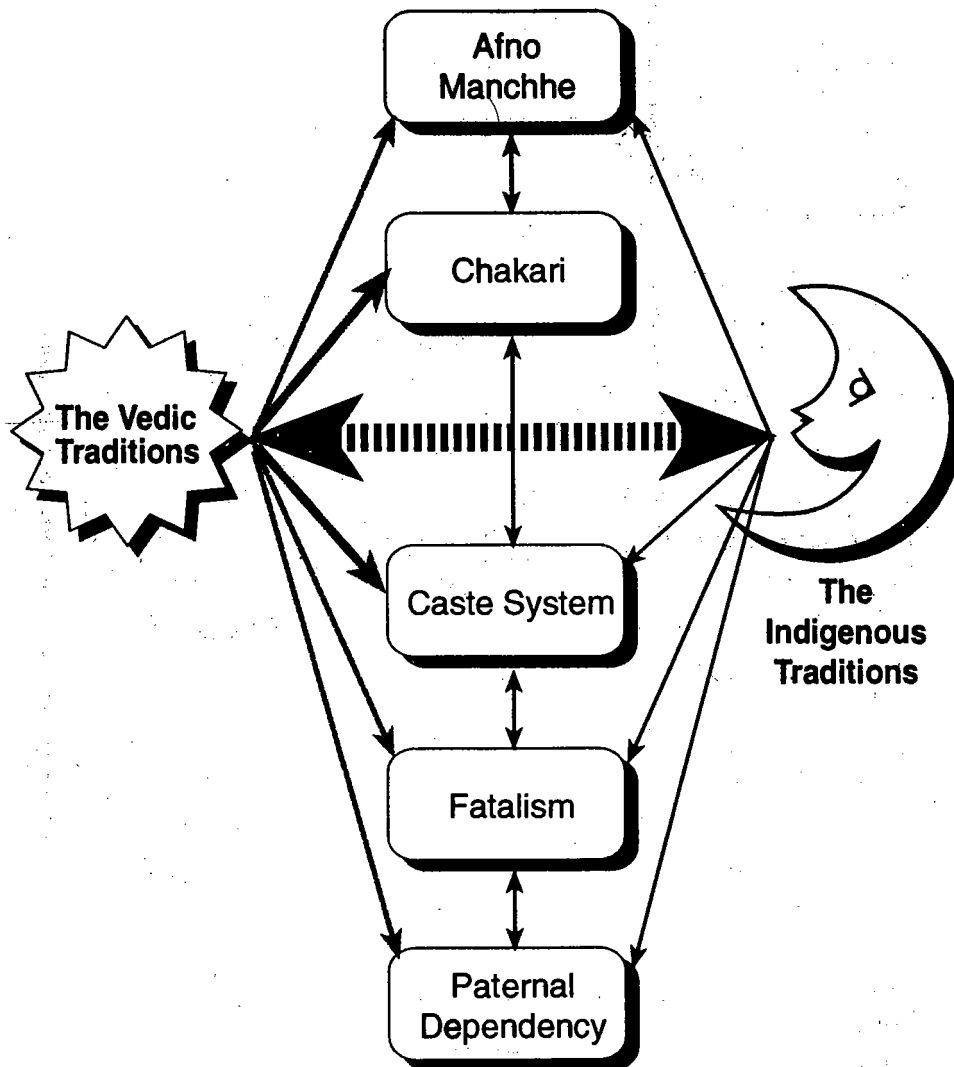
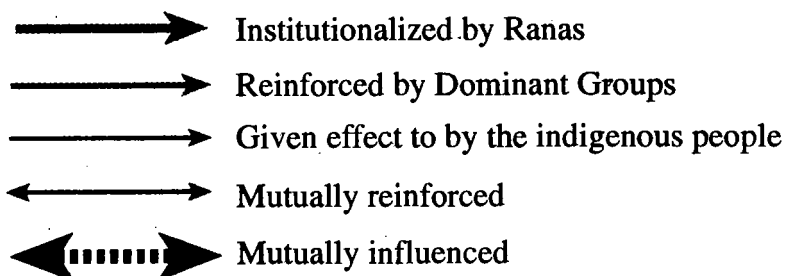


Figure 2: The Formation of Domination



**Figure 3: The Vedic and Indigenous Traditions**



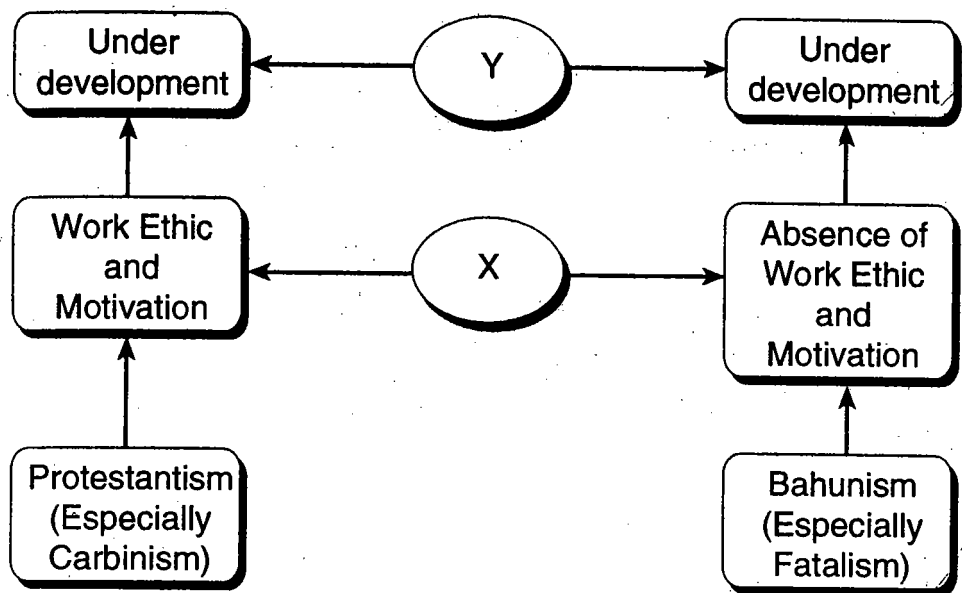


Figure 4: The Schemes of Weber and Bista

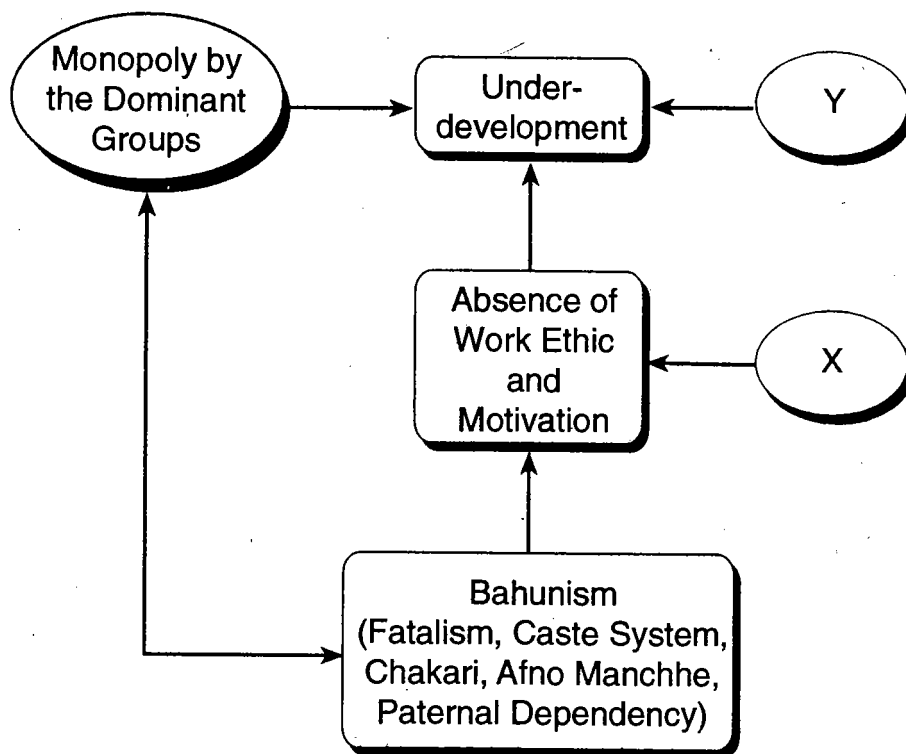
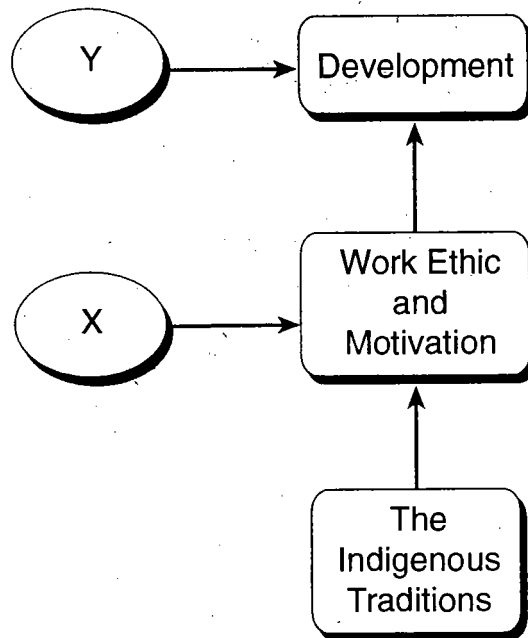


Figure 5: Scheme of Underdevelopment





**Figure 6: Scheme for Development**

# THE NEWARS: THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION OF THE KATHMANDU VALLEY IN THE MODERN STATE OF NEPAL

Bal Gopal Shrestha

## Introduction

The Newars are the 'traditional' inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley, whose population comprises 1,041,090 i.e. 5.6 percent of the total population of Nepal, i.e. 18,491,092 in 1991.<sup>1</sup> Although the Newars are spread throughout the country and beyond its boundaries in different parts of India, the majority of them are still concentrated in the valley of Kathmandu, which is the capital of modern Nepal. Previously, only the valley of Kathmandu was known by the name 'Nepal', and for many people the word 'Nepal' still continues to mean it. The Newars speak Nepālbhāṣā, a Tibeto-Burman language with a rich ancient and modern literature going back to the fourteenth century. During the Malla reign, from the 13th century till its downfall in 1769, the Kings themselves did a great deal to promote literature in Nepālbhāṣā, as well as in other languages like Maithilī, Avadhī, Bhojpurī, and Bengālī. Sanskrit literary tradition was cultivated in the Kathmandu valley for fifteen centuries. The Malla courts supported all languages, classical and vernacular, without discrimination. The extent of the literary tradition in other languages indicates the cosmopolitan nature of the Malla courts (Malla 1982: 7). The bulk of the rich tradition of Newar art and architecture, ritual and culture, dates back to this period.

For some time this tradition continued after the Gorkha conquest of Nepal in 1769 A.D.. The treaty of 1775 between Tibet and Nepal during the reign of King Pratap Singh Shah was compiled in Nepālbhāṣā. The Shah Kings Ranabahadur (1777-1799) and Girvanyuddha (1799-1816) wrote many songs in Nepālbhāṣā.<sup>2</sup> King Rajendravikram (1816-1847) even wrote a play in Nepālbhāṣā.<sup>3</sup> In the later period of the Shah reign, however, the Nepālbhāṣā was replaced by the language of the rulers, the *Khasakurā* (The latter language is at present known as Nepālī, which is now the official language of Nepal). Fifty years from the end of Rajendravikram's reign until

the beginning of the renaissance period (1899-1940), Nepālbhāṣā literature was conspicuously absent, except for a few religious songs. The discontinuation of Nepālbhāṣā literature during that period still remains a mystery. With the rise of the Rana oligarchy (1847-1951)<sup>4</sup> the Shah Kings were almost imprisoned by their prime ministers. At the beginning of this century, in 1905 Rana prime minister Chandra Shamsheer (1900-1928) banned Nepālbhāṣā from the court of justice, the administration, land registration and so on.<sup>5</sup> His successors, such as Juddha Shamsheer (1932-1945), went even further in restricting the Nepālbhāṣā writings.<sup>6</sup> Many Nepālbhāṣā writers had to suffer jail sentences and many others were exiled during this period. From then onwards, Newar intellectuals started to establish literary organisations to promote their language. The language movement which did not have any feature of an ethnic inspiration at the beginning began to acquire an ethnic nature from the late 1970s. In September 1995 the National Forum of the Newars (*Nevāh De Dabū*) was founded, with the aim of seeking to assert the ethnic rights of the Newars.

### Historical Background of Newar Identity

**The Origin of the Newars:** The word 'Newar' is etymologically identical with the place name 'Nepāl'. According to the historian Baburam Acharya the words Nevār, Nevāl or Nevāh all have developed from the single word 'Nepāl'.<sup>7</sup> Malla confirms that an A.D. 512 inscription of Vasantadev of Tistung is the first evidence that the word Nepāl was used for the people of Nepal.<sup>8</sup> According to the oldest chronicle of Nepal the *Gopālarājavamsāvalī* the Kirātas ruled Nepal for 32 generations.<sup>9</sup> So far there is no recorded history of the Kirātas. Only their successors, the Lichhavis, who ruled Nepal from the fifth to the ninth century A.D. have left a corpus of inscriptions. Those inscriptions are all in pure Sanskrit language. By analysing the place and river names written in those inscriptions K.P. Malla concluded that, although the Lichhavi rulers were inclined to use Sanskrit, the language spoken by the people belonged to the Tibeto-Burman stock. He considers it likely that the nominal found in the inscriptions are an archaic form of Nepālbhāṣā.<sup>10</sup> According to Gellner (1995:5) 'The Nepālbhāṣā seems to have been spoken by the inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley as far back as records go.' Another anthropologist Bista (1976: 16) writes, 'The Newar people had been settled in the Nepal Valley since prehistoric time'.

After the Lichhavis, Nepal was ruled by the Thakuris from the ninth to the twelfth centuries. But not much historical evidence has been found from this period. So far, the earliest evidence of the use of the Nepālbhāṣā is found on a palm leaf of Pāṭan Ukū Bāhāl dated A.D. 1114.<sup>11</sup> The earliest dated epigraph

on stone in the Nepālbhāṣā was found at Vajrayoginī Sankhu and dated A.D. 1172. Later, during the Malla period (1200-1768), the Nepālbhāṣā flourished, both in inscriptions and in manuscripts. Vast collections of classical Nepālbhāṣā literature are preserved in Nepal in the National Archives, the Keshar library and the Āśā Archives, whereas thousands of manuscripts from Nepal have been carried away by Western scholars and deposited in different libraries of the world.<sup>12</sup>

In the Malla period the name *Nepālbhāṣā* was the common name for Nepālbhāṣā. The first use of the word Newar was found in an inscription dated A.D. 1654 of King Pratap Malla at Hanumandhoka (Malla 1991: 32). The Newar people to this day call their language *Nepālbhāṣā*; in western philology it is now more commonly known by the name 'Nevāri' (Lienhard 1992: 3).<sup>13</sup> For centuries Nepal, the valley of Kathmandu, remained a melting pot for people of different races and different creeds:

The race of the Niwars is a mixed race, derived from Indian or Thibetan stocks, and their religion naturally presents a corresponding mixture of the Indian and Thibetan creeds. [Oldfield 1974(1880): 73]

From the religious point of view the majority of Newars follow Hinduism and Buddhism inseparably.<sup>14</sup> There are also Muslim and Christian Newars in Nepal. Muslim Newars have long been living in Kathmandu and speak the Nepālbhāṣā. The Christian Newars were forced in exile to India as soon as the Gorkha King Prithivinarayan Shah conquered Nepal in 1769.

Since the valley of Nepal was the centre of trade, culture and civilisation, the Gorkha conquerors had to accommodate the Newars in the modern state of Nepal. At the same time a section of Newar traders virtually welcomed the Gorkha conquest and extended help to strengthen their hands.<sup>15</sup> However, many Newar inhabitants who fought against the Gorkha invaders had to suffer a great deal: they either received capital punishment or were forced into exile, while the people belonging to areas like Kirtipur and Patan were severely tortured.<sup>16</sup>

To a certain extent the Gorkha rulers continued to support the culture and traditions of the Newars. By using the palace of the Malla Kings the Gorkha Kings also accepted Newar court culture and traditions. Many feasts and festivals of the Newars were given royal support as before. As traders the Newars received more opportunities to develop their profession under the Gorkha rule. They spread all over the Kingdom and opened shops wherever they went. Many new Newar settlements appeared outside the valley of Nepal.<sup>17</sup> The latest population census of Nepal reports that Newars are spread

in all the 75 districts of the country. However, in many districts their number is very low.<sup>18</sup>

Under the hands of the new rulers Newar language and culture had to suffer in a great deal. The composition of Newar society is highly complicated with divisions in castes and caste hierarchies. It is said that the division of castes was introduced among the Newars by the early Malla King Jayasthiti (A.D. 1382-1395), as the nineteenth century chronicles and oral traditions testify (Vaidya Shrestha 1995: 180-90). But the 'Newar' caste hierarchy began to acquire after 1769 conquest of the Gorkha a rigidity it had not had before as they were made subordinated to Parbatīyās' (Gellner 1995: 12).<sup>19</sup> Later, under the Gorkha rule, the first Rana prime minister Janga Bahadur introduced a legal code in 1854. In spite of their own caste system the Newars were collectively labelled one *jāt* (caste) in the 1854 legal code, and their castes were lumped together with other Parbate castes. The Parbates follow Hindu Varnaśram caste hierarchies, which divide their society into four distinct levels: Brahmin at the top and Gāine, Damai, Sarkī and Kāmī at the bottom. Other ethnic groups were also ranked under the same caste system.<sup>20</sup> The 1854 legal code gave the Newars their separate ethnic identity as a culturally and linguistically distinct group.

### **The Newars Under the Rana Rule (1846-1950)**

**The Suppression of Nepāl bhāṣā :** During the early Rana period, Newars were able to get various administrative posts. Some were made tax collectors or acquired influential administrative posts. In 1861 one Newar called Siddhiman was offered the military title of colonel.<sup>21</sup> Yet the Newars were excluded from political or decision-making posts as well as from military service from the beginning of the Gorkha conquest in 1769. Before 1890 people in general had no opportunity to educate their children in Nepal. In the 1890s when the first school of Nepal, 'Durbar (Palace) School' was made accessible to the public, the Newars were among the first to make use of education (Malla 1992: 22). The Rana rulers were afraid of any kind of social awakening because their rule was not based on popular support. Their rule was in fact a minority rule. Even within the Rana families themselves sabotage, division and struggle for posts and power were obvious. The Valley of Kathmandu was closed for people from other parts of Nepal. So they realised that the real danger came from educated people in the valley itself who might turn against their family rule. They were especially afraid of those people who were exposed to India and inspired by the freedom fighters there. It was the time when Indian people were already widely active in the Indian National Congress (1885) against British colonialism.<sup>22</sup> Since the Ranas in Nepal were working closely with the British they were warned by

the British of possible revolts. So the Ranas saw the Newars as the inhabitants of the politically centralised state and as possible antagonists who might strangle them any time. Intellectuals, social reformers, political activists or religious reformers such as Theravāda Buddhists or Ārya Samāj supporters were all regarded as a threat to their autocratic rule.

The suppression of the Nepālbhāṣā and of Newar intellectuals intensified during the reign of Chandra Shamsheer (1901-1928). In 1905, he banned Newar Language from the court of justice and administration. The language of the Newars 'Nepālbhāṣā' began to be called 'Nevāri' while the name 'Nepālī' used to designate the 'Khasakurā' or Gorkhālī language.<sup>23</sup> In the later period of the Rana regime Newar intellectuals had to suffer heavily. The Rana regime was afraid of Newar Language and wanted to suppress it to stop any propaganda which might be communicated through that language against their minority rule. Interestingly, at the same time the Nepālbhāṣā literary renaissance age (1899-1940)<sup>24</sup> began, which became a milestone in the history of Newari literature. Pandit Nisthananda Vajracarya (1858-1935), Siddhidas Amatya (1867-1930), Jagat Sundar Malla (1882-1952), and Yogvir Singh Kansakar (1886-1941) are the four most eminent literary figures of the Nepālbhāṣā renaissance period.

In 1909, Nisthananda, the eldest among them was the first to publish a Nepālbhāṣā book, entitled *Ekaviṃśati Prajñāpāramitā*, a Buddhist text with Sanskrit śloka. In 1914, he printed another book, *Lalitavistara*, which deals with Buddha's life, many other Buddhist religious stories, and the *Svayambhūpurāṇa*, a mythical story about the creation of the Nepal Valley. Though these works were based on religious stories, he lent his own originality to them. He brought printing equipment from Calcutta and carried out all the printing work himself, including the laborious job of letter composition. Later it became difficult for him to print his books because the government imposed censorship on all publications. Virtually all Nepālbhāṣā publications were banned. So Nisthananda had to print and distribute his books secretly.<sup>25</sup> His major contribution was to publish materials for the first time in the spoken language of Newar society, using the *Devanāgarī* script to do it. Newar scholars had used old scripts and old language in writing and copying thousands of manuscripts without taking changes in their spoken language into account. The tradition of copying manuscripts by hand in Nepal scripts (Bhujimol, Pracalit or Ranjanā scripts) continued until the beginning of this century.<sup>26</sup>

The most prolific writer of Nepālbhāṣā literature during the renaissance period was Siddhidas Amatya. He wrote nearly fifty books including a version of the epic *Rāmāyaṇa*. His early writings deal mainly with religious and moral philosophy, and later he wrote many poems which reflect his ideas

on social reforms. He advocated equal rights for women including access to education. He wrote against caste discrimination which was then supported by law. These were in fact revolutionary writings for his time. He used to visit the gatherings of *Ārya Samāj*, whose members were active in social reform programmes.<sup>27</sup> There he encouraged young people to write in Nepālbhāṣā. An active young man of *Ārya Samāj*, Jyanbahadur Newa, writes that he would never have become a writer in Nepālbhāṣā if Siddhidas had not inspired him in those meetings (Newa 1967: 142-3). Many young students who were inspired by Siddhidas later became very famous writers of Nepal. One of the avowed adherents of the *Ārya Samāj* Sukraraj Shastri was hanged by the Rana government in 1941. He was the author of the first Nepālbhāṣā grammar, *Nepālbhāṣā Vyākaraṇa* (1928), and also wrote text books in Nepālbhāṣā for children *Nepālbhāṣā Varnamālā*, *Nepālbhāṣā Reader 1* and *2* (1933). Sukraraj was executed together with three other political activists: Gangalal Shrestha, Dharmabhakta Mathema and Dasharath Chand. They were all members of the People's Council (*Prajā Parishad*), which was an anti-Rana political organisation backed by King Tribhuvan. But Sukraraj himself had no political connection with the *Prajā Parishad* and was punished because of his association with the *Ārya Samāj* and his social reform activities (Rose and Joshi 1966: 55). These four martyrs except Dasharath Chand were Newars. However, it would be wrong to conclude that they were executed because they were Newar nationalists.

In 1912, Jagat Sundar Malla, who advocated education in the mother tongue, opened a school in Nepālbhāṣā in Bhaktapur. He wrote English-Nepālbhāṣā and Nepālbhāṣā-English dictionaries, as well as text books, both in Nepālbhāṣā and in Nepali. He was arrested and threatened with imprisonment if he did not stop his activities. He was the first to advocate education in the mother tongue. He had to pretend being mad to continue his work.<sup>28</sup>

In a similar manner Yogvir Singh, the youngest among the four literary figures suffered at the hands of the Ranas. He was arrested on several occasions, fined and tortured. His cloth shop became a gathering place for Nepālbhāṣā as well as Nepali writers of those days.<sup>29</sup> When it was found out by the government, their writings were seized, and they were severely warned not to hold such meetings. In 1924, when he published one of his religious poems he and his publisher were fined. In 1929, Yogvir and his friends sought permission to open a public library. All those who signed this petition were fined heavily.

The Rana regime was supported by the British colonial power. But, with increasing protests against their occupation of India, the British themselves were losing ground. So the fear of the Ranas was understandable. They were

terrified by the increasing nationalist movement in India, as it was encouraging the educated youngsters of Nepal. They wanted to stop such developments in Nepal at any cost. The suppression of the Nepālbhāṣā writers, the majority population in the centre of power, was one expression of this fear. Therefore, another Rana prime minister, Juddha Shamsheer, went further in the effort to suppress the Nepālbhāṣā. In 1933 he called a meeting of all known Newar writers and pressed them to stop writing. In January 1941, when he learned that with King Tribhuvan's support some young people were active in the *Prajā Pariṣad* (People's Council), he was infuriated. He arrested many other people together with members of the Council. They were social activists, teachers and writers. The four martyrs mentioned above were also connected with this incident. On this occasion many Nepālbhāṣā writers were also arrested and sent to jail for several years. This proved to be a gift to Nepālbhāṣā literature because some of the political prisoners turned into writers. Though they had to write secretly they wrote many books in prison, which made a significant contribution to Nepālbhāṣā literature (Malla 1978: 17-18).

**Literary publications and organisations:** The brave 'Bir' history of Nepālī literature began in India with the publication of the weekly *Gorkhālī* (1915-16) from Banaras by Suryabikram Gyawali and *Candrikā* from Kurseong by Parasmani Pradhan, which postulated the nationalistic image of modern Nepal.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the Newar people living in India for study or business purposes were also active in the service of their mother tongue. They started establishing organisations and publications from India. In 1926, the first Nepālbhāṣā literary organisation *Nepālbhāṣā Sāhitya Maṇḍala* was founded in Calcutta by Dharmaditya Dharmacarya (1902-1963), who had earlier started publishing the first Nepālbhāṣā journal *Buddhadharma va Nepālbhāṣā* (1925-1928).<sup>31</sup> Those Buddhist monks who had been expelled from Nepal in 1944 for advocating *Theravāda* established *Dharmodaya Sabhā*, a Buddhist Religious Council in Sarnath and started publishing books in Nepālbhāṣā. Later this Sabhā started publishing a second Nepālbhāṣā journal *Dharmodaya* (1946) (Kasa 1988, Joshi 1974). *Cvasāpāsā*, another Nepālbhāṣā literary association was also established in Calcutta (May 1950). It came to Nepal after the political changes in February 1951.

In 1945, together with some political prisoners, Cittadhar Hridaya and other Nepālbhāṣā writers were released from prison by the Rana government. In the same year, Padma Samsheer, who was more liberal than his predecessors became prime minister. In 1946, he allowed those Buddhist monks, who had been expelled from Nepal, to return. He also lifted the ban on Nepālbhāṣā publications and opened a separate department of censorship



for publications in Nepālbhāṣā. Within three or four years 115 Nepālbhāṣā books were cleared by the censorship as recorded by the-then censor officer Khadgaman Malla of the Nepālbhāṣā department (Malla 1983: 58-81). But the liberalisation process of the Rana regime started too late. In 1947, when India achieved independence, anti-Rana movements gained greater momentum in Nepal, whereas Rana rule continued to slacken after the British retreat from India. In February 1951, the Nepali people overthrew the Rana autocracy and a multi-party democracy was introduced in Nepal.

### **The 1951 Change and Nepālbhāṣā Movement**

In spite of the political changes of 1951, the Nepālbhāṣā did not gain much in status. It did not achieve the right to be used in the court of justice or in the administration. In a way, Nepālbhāṣā lost more ground than before under the so-called democracy. Nepālbhāṣā was highly important as a language of the Valley. It was the language of the highly educated community of Nepal. As a language of the cultural centre and the centre of power, Nepālbhāṣā was the language of wider communication and also served as a lingua franca. It had to loose gradually under new system, because it did not receive any recognition from the government, while Nepali alone was made the medium language of government, administrations and schools.

In January 1951, just before the fall of the Ranas, 'Democracy Radio Nepal' (*Prajātantra Radio Nepal*) started an anti-Rana propaganda medium broadcasting news in Nepali, Nepālbhāṣā and Hindi languages. Shortly after the 1951 change, many public schools were opened to educate the common people. Unfortunately, in those schools Nepālbhāṣā was not recognised as a medium of instruction. It was only taught as an optional subject. The *Nepāl Rāṣṭriya Vithyāpīṭha*, a non-governmental organisation which took the initiative in the field of education in the public sector, recognised Nepālbhāṣā as an alternative medium in those schools and colleges which were run by them. This compelled Newar scholars to take responsibilities to produce educational materials in Nepālbhāṣā.

On March 3, 1951, the Council of Nepālbhāṣā Language (*Nepālbhāṣā Pariṣad*), was formed by Newar scholars, which began to publish educational materials and literary books. Simultaneously, other Nepālbhāṣā organisations also started work in similar fields. In this way they had more freedom than before to work for their mother tongue. During this period many new publications in Nepālbhāṣā appeared and new organisations were established. The first Nepālbhāṣā daily newspaper and literary magazines appeared during this same period.

However, in 1956, the interim government of K.I. Singh declared Nepali to be the only language of instruction in schools at the cost of all other

languages of Nepal. This decision inspired some protests in the Tarai (southern belt of Nepal) in favour of the Hindi language (Rose and Joshi 1966: 202) but no protest was made by the Nepālbhāṣā speakers. The 1959 constitution of Nepal declared Nepali to be the national language of Nepal. The ten years of democracy in Nepal produced a chaotic situation. Allegations among the political parties and counter-allegations, and sometimes even within one party, revealed dramatic divisions. Their aims were to hold on to power or to capture power. As a result, the people were getting fed up with politics. The first general elections took place in 1959, and gave the *Nepali Congress Party* a massive victory. But the clashes within the ruling party rapidly increased. The end came in 1961, with King Mahendra banning all political parties.

Propagating the disadvantages of the multi-party system he introduced the partyless *Panchayat System* in Nepal. Freedom of expression was limited under that system. To the detriment of all other languages, religions and ethnicity, he strongly imposed a "one nation, one language and one religion" policy in favour of the Nepali language, the Brahmins and Chhetri (Khas) community, and the Hindu religion. Therefore, together with all other non-Nepali languages of Nepal, Nepālbhāṣā again suffered a great setback under Khas chauvinism.<sup>32</sup> In 1965, Radio Nepal stopped broadcasting Nepālbhāṣā and Hindi news. It gave rise to protests from literary circles. Various Nepālbhāṣā literary and cultural organisations in the Valley organised protest literary meetings for one year. Many Nepālbhāṣā writers were arrested and tortured. But the protests were limited to the literary elites who were unable to gain support from the common people. It was because the common people did not realise the consequences of the repressive measure applied against their language by the government. Even within the literary circle the division was obvious. So the protest meetings had to stop without having achieved anything. However, a year long of literary protest meetings inspired a number of youths, most of whom remained devoted to the cause of language rights.

Publication became more difficult with the imposition of the censorship which intended to prevent any kind of publication against the *Panchayat System*. For many years no new Nepālbhāṣā journals or newspapers received permission to be published. In 1971, the New Education Plan was introduced which pushed the Nepālbhāṣā further back by forcing children to make a choice between Nepālbhāṣā or other languages, science, vocational subjects, mathematics, and so forth.

Nevertheless, Newar intellectuals were trying to encourage loyalty to their mother tongue among the Newars through various literary and cultural organisations. Organising weekly, monthly or yearly literary programmes, celebrating the birthdays of the late Nepālbhāṣā writers, or observing New

Years' day<sup>33</sup>, they were active in promoting language sentiment. Such activities gradually spread from the Kathmandu Valley to many other small and big Newar towns. In a small town like Sankhu, where no literary association existed till the early 1960s a single person, the poet Girija Prasad Joshi (1939-1987) inspired literary and cultural movements. He stimulated many young people to dedicate themselves to the cause of the Nepālbhāṣā. Such literary activities spread to many other Newar settlements in the late 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, motivating many youngsters to work for the promotion of Nepālbhāṣā.

### **The Formation of Nepālbhāṣā Mamkāḥ Khalah (The Association of Newar Speakers)**

The quotation of the Newar poet Siddidas Amatya *Bhāṣā Mvāsā Jāti Mvāi* (If the language survives, the nation will survive) is often quoted in Nepālbhāṣā programmes. However, it took many years for the Newar elites to realise the necessity to unite themselves ethnically. The necessity of Newar unity for the sake of their language and their nation (*jāti*) was repeatedly emphasised by literary elites, but the common Newar people have yet to be convinced. At the same time, the social structure of Newar society do not allow them to unite so easily among themselves. On the one hand unequal division of classes do not permit them to unite and on the other hand their traditional caste distribution divide them heavily. Even in a small town like Sankhu where all inhabitants are Newars, they are not united among themselves. One of the reason is the traditional caste structure. The elaborate caste system of the Newars adds to the complexity of the society. On one hand there is the separation between the different castes, on the other hand there is their interdependency, a paradox existing in the greater part of South Asia. Although, Sankhu is a small town, there are 21 castes, each of them are having their traditional caste bound duties, which also rank them in a hierarchical order. Social division is prevalent because of the caste structure. Especially, to those low caste groups whose traditional duties are being stigmatised it is still hard to provide them with a feeling that each of them are integral parts of Newar national movement. To a certain extent, the feeling of *cvay* (upper) *kvay* (lower), the division between the northern and southern half of the town also divide the Newars among themselves. Small towns like Sankhu or Nala as well as big cities like Kathmandu or Bhaktapur can equally supply such examples of divisions.<sup>34</sup>

In 1979, following the consequences of a students' movement, King Birendra, announced the political referendum on whether to retain the partyless *Panchayat System* with certain reforms, or to re-introduce the multi-party system. In April 1979, all kinds of restrictions against public gatherings

and meetings were lifted. This new situation allowed the Newars to organise themselves in a new way for the cause of their language and national identity. In this regard the formation of the Association of Newar Speakers (*Nepālbhāṣā Mamkāh Khalah*) in August 1979 was a historical step. It was the first time that the Newars expressed themselves in a collective manner and appealed to the Newars for the necessity to obtain rights for their language, cultures and nationality from the state. They categorically rejected the "one language-one nation" policy of the government and urged equal rights to all languages and nationalities of Nepal. Their demands included education in the mother tongue to children, rights for all languages to be used in the court of justice and in administration, access for all languages into the government media, and recognition of the culture of all nationalities.<sup>35</sup>

In the same year, in October/November 1979 the Association organised a big New Year's rally in Kathmandu. The New Year's day was also celebrated in Patan, Bhaktapur and other Newar towns. A motor cycle rally which was organised to observe the New Year's day went outside the Valley through different Newar settlements. In the following years, the New Year's day continued to be celebrated in this manner. This tradition was copied by the Newars of other places. Consequently, in many Newar settlements the Newar people have formed their own ethnic organisations.

In the 1980 referendum, the partyless *Panchayat System* won against the multi-party system and the old language policy continued. No changes took place in favour of the various nationalities and languages. Parties were once again banned and press freedom controlled. However, it had become impossible for the government to go back to the situation preceding the referendum. Parties were allowed to function using the epithet "banned" before their names. Likewise, the Nepalese press tried to continue the freedom which it had acquired during the referendum period. In 1982, the *Nepālbhāṣā* weekly *Ināp* was launched in Kathmandu.<sup>36</sup> It played a vital rôle in developing language awareness among the Newars. Its circulation was not limited to the Kathmandu Valley but also reached many other Newar towns outside the valley.

The Association of Newar Speakers assumed greater importance, but because of the autonomous feelings in each place, it did not succeed to bring under its umbrella the organisations outside Kathmandu district.

In 1986, the chairman of the Association of Newar Speakers, Padmaratna Tuladhar stood for the *Rāṣṭriya Pañcāyat* (National Assembly) as a multi-party supporter, but he was labelled more as a Newar candidate by those who were against his views on language and ethnic rights. He was successful because of his statements in favour of the multi-party system and ethnic rights in the *Rāṣṭriya Pañcāyat* he rapidly gained enormous popularity. This inspired

other ethnic groups of Nepal to establish their own ethnic organisations. In a way the Association of Newar Speakers played a leading role in promoting ethnic awareness in Nepal. In 1986, the Forum for the Rights of All Nationalities (*Sarvajātiya Adhikāra Maṃca*) emerged as a consequence of the joint efforts of individuals of different nationalities to take a collective stand for equal rights of all nationalities, languages, culture and religions. To a certain extent this Association was able to spread ethnic awareness, but it failed to organise different ethnic groups under its umbrella. It soon became inactive and disappeared from the scene.

### Question of Ethnicity in Nepal

The issue of minorities and their rights was ignored or suppressed during the thirty years of *Pancāyat* rule (1961-1990). Soon after the 1990 political change which re-introduced multi-party system in Nepal, the voice of minorities became clearer. Not only the Newars but also many other ethnic groups of Nepal began to organise themselves to promote their rights.

In 1990, the joint effort of different minority groups resulted in a new forum called *Nepal Janajāti Māhāsamgha* (Federation of the Nationalities of Nepal), which began with the participation of eighteen nationalities (Bhattachan 1995: 7). The membership of nationalities increased in subsequent years. The Federation came out boldly in favour of the minorities. In November 1990, Nepal received a new constitution. The new constitution again introduced a multi-party system, and appeared to have a multinational and even a multilingual nature, yet the Nepali language remained the "Rāṣṭra Bhāṣā" "national language" for official use, while other languages were recognised as "Rāṣṭriya bhāṣā" "languages of the nation" on the basis of the article 6 (1) and (2) of the constitution. Article 18 (1) states that all communities living in the Kingdom have the right to preserve and promote their languages, scripts and cultures. Article 18 (2) grants the right to educate children in their mother tongue up till the primary level.<sup>37</sup> As a gesture, the government-owned Radio Nepal allocated 5 minutes per day to each of the 12 languages in broadcasting its news. In 1993, the government itself constituted "The National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission" (*Rāṣṭriya Bhāṣā Nīti Sujhāva Āyog*). In a report, this Commission supplied many suggestions including the urgency to provide education in various national languages and the use of national languages in local administrations.<sup>38</sup> However, the government implemented none of those suggestions till today.

Nepal is not large in physical shape (spread over 147,181 square kilometres) but it has many ethnic and tribal groups. The 1991 census lists 60 ethnic and caste groups, but this list is not complete: to a certain extent the list is confusing because castes and nationalities are lumped together, as Gurung

(1995: 1-2) has pointed out. As a small state with so many ethnic groups it is not a simple task for Nepal to tackle the rising phenomenon of ethnicity. To develop mutual understanding among the different groups in a multi-ethnic country like Nepal is a real difficult task. At present, many ethnic groups of Nepal feel that they are eclipsed by Khas language and cultural chauvinism. This can only lead to undesirable hostilities.<sup>39</sup> Soon after the 1990 political change, from eastern Nepal one group of Limbus have raised hateful slogans against the Brahmins "*cucco nākha kātaum*" (Slaughter the pointed noses). What kind of situation it might bring if such feelings are fuelled continuously is unpredictable.

The minority groups of Nepal have presented their demands in different ways. However, the nature of their demands is not different in principle. As an example we may consider the demands presented by M.M. Shrestha, the coordinator of the *Nevāḥ Rāṣṭriya Āndolan Samanvay Samiti* (The Newars' National Movement Coordination Committee),<sup>40</sup> which are considered most radical in their view:

1. Right of autonomy for all nationalities in those areas where they have the dense population.
2. A change in the present Upper House of Parliament into a House of Nationalities with equal elected representatives from all small or big national, ethnic or tribal groups irrespective of their number; with this institution having the same power as the House of Representatives.
- 3.1. To replace the article in the constitution giving special status to one language, by an article giving equal rights to all languages of Nepal.
- 3.2. To encourage the use of all languages for communication by the central government.
- 3.3. The right to use all languages in the courts of justice and administration at both the local and central levels.
4. To make education in the mother tongues available from the lower to the highest level.

The general secretary of the Federation of Nationalities of Nepal (*Janajāti Mahāsamgha*) Parsuram Tamang brought forward similar demands for the *Tamangs* (Tamang 1992: 25).<sup>41</sup> There are now even more radical organisations like Sadbhāvanā Party (Goodwill Party) of the Tarai or The National Party of the Nationalities (*Rāṣṭriya Janajāti Party*) whose demand is to make Nepal a federal state of different nationalities (Bhattachan 1995: 131-2). The most radical demands came from The All Nepal Nationalities'

Organisation (*Akhil Nepāl Janajāti Samgha*), whose demand includes right of secession for all nationalities of Nepal.<sup>42</sup>

Both the right of secession and the right of autonomy, are in great debate among the intellectuals of Nepal at present. From a practical point of view, the right of secession is the most extreme demand to be accomplished in present day Nepal, because Nepal is physically a small country and is situated between two giant countries like China and India. The territorial disintegration of this country can lead it nowhere. To grant autonomy to various ethnic groups may be more practical in Nepal to protect them together with their languages and cultures.<sup>43</sup> However, this is not possible within the present demarcations of districts and villages, which in a quite illogical manner divides minorities into several fragments within their own areas.

For the present purpose it will be interesting to look at the views of the different political parties in Nepal. The Nepali Congress, a major party, thinks that to talk about the problem of nationalities is destructive in Nepal, whereas a rightist party, the *Rāstriya Prajātantra Party*, the Tarai based *Sadbhāvanā* Party, as well as the CPN (UML), talk about the rights of nationalities and languages of Nepal, but fail to implement their programmes on nationalities and languages when they were in power.<sup>44</sup> Recently the CPN (UML) has been split into two factions; the majority faction is carrying same name while the minority faction has named itself CPN (ML). So far, no drastic changes in these two parties are expected pertaining to languages and ethnicity policies. Small Communist Parties such as the CPN (Masāl), CPN (MLM), CPN (Maoist) and Nepali Communist League demand equal rights and autonomy for all nationalities. The CPN (Maoist) even presented radical demands that include the secession right for all nationalities.<sup>45</sup> The All Nepal Nationalities Organisation (*Akhil Nepāl Janajāti Samgha*) emerged as a sister organisation of CPN (Maoist).<sup>46</sup> This is a new trend, formerly, no other groups which were active in ethnic movement preferred to link themselves with any political parties of Nepal. Since the Nepalese people from different nationalities are divided into as many factions as there are political parties it is very difficult to predict where this trend will lead them. The existing political parties of Nepal have not yet been able to convince the oppressed nationalities (*janajāti*) in Nepal that they deserve their support. They generally think that slogans presented in favour of nationalities by various political parties are not sincere. This is because the leadership of most political parties in Nepal, including the leadership of the most vocal CPN Maoist is in the hands of Brahmin-Kshetris, the dominant group of Nepal who speak Nepali, the official language of Nepal.

In the May 1997 local elections, the CPN (UML), which swept a two-third majority in Kathmandu Metropolis, and won the post of both mayor and

deputy mayor, promised to make the Nepālbhāṣā the official language of the municipality. According to their promise, the board of Kathmandu Municipality passed a resolution and declared Nepālbhāṣā a language of the Municipality in addition to Nepali, on 24 July 1997 thus introducing Nepālbhāṣā in Kathmandu Municipality after more than three decades.<sup>47</sup> This example has been followed by other municipalities outside the Valley like Rajbiraj and Dhanusha Municipalities and District Development Committees for Maithili speaking people. At the same time, Nepali speakers in Kathmandu have filed a petition in the Supreme Court against the making of Nepālbhāṣā an additional medium language in Kathmandu Metropolis,<sup>48</sup> and the Supreme Court on 18 March 1998 issued a stay order to Kathmandu Metropolis, Rajbiraj and Dhanusha Municipalities and District Development Committees to refrain from using local languages for official purposes.<sup>49</sup> The Newars have already started their action against the order by organising an action Committee, *Nepālbhāṣā Saṁgharsa Samiti*. In a similar manner, the Mathili speaking people are in action against the order. They also have launched joint action forming an "All Languages Action Committee of Nepal" against the Supreme Court order. We have yet to see what consequences the decision taken by the Supreme Court in favour of the dominant language against the other languages of Nepal may have.

### **Emergence of the Nevāḥ De Dabū, the National Forum of the Newars**

The Newars were busy at their own pace to arrive at a consensus for a national organisation of their own. In February 1991, the *Nepālbhāṣā Pariṣad* (The Council of Nepālbhāṣā) held a two-day conference on the Newar nationality and language.<sup>50</sup> It tried to bring together representatives from different districts of Nepal and discussed government statistics on the Newars as well as the necessity of a Newar national organisation. Besides the Council, *Cvasāpāsā* was functioning as an academy of literature in Nepālbhāṣā, and published many books. With the co-operation of Toyota Foundation, Japan, it has translated many Japanese as well as South Asian literary works into Nepālbhāṣā, Nepali and Maithili. The most important contribution of *Cvasāpāsā* is the Āśā Archives, where more than six thousand old manuscripts have been collected and made accessible to all scholars interested in Nepali history, art, culture, religions, rituals and traditions.<sup>51</sup> In addition to these academic institutions Newar intellectuals founded their own academy the *Nepālbhāṣā Academy* in 1992. The urgency of the time was not only city-centred scholarly associations, but also a mass based organisation which can inspire the new generation of Newar society. It could be achieved only through originating a national Newar organisation.



In October 1992, the second convention of the Association of Newar Speakers was held in Kathmandu, but it became controversial because of the Communist party of Nepal United Marxist Leninist (CPN UML) preponderance.<sup>52</sup> The Association lost credibility because most Newars wanted such organisations to be free from party politics. This resulted in the establishment of another organisation in Kathmandu, the Newars Trust (*Nevāh Guthi*) 1993, with the aim to build a mass-based ethnic organisation. The Trust established branches in many places, but it was again divided into two factions in 1996. Internal divisions developed in the Trust about the location of its office and later developed into a political conflict.<sup>53</sup> Both factions held their central conventions separately in July 1996, thus making it difficult for the trust to maintain itself as a mass-based Newar organisation.

The Association of Newar Speakers, on the other hand, had long been trying to build a consensus among the Newars to establish a national organisation. In 1992, when its second convention was held in Kathmandu, one of its main targets was to hold a gathering of the Newars to form a national organisation. In December 1994, it held a two-day seminar to discuss the basic requirements for a national convention of the Newars. As a result, they succeeded in forming an ad hoc committee to hold such a national convention. Soon after that, on September 1-2, 1995, it took place in Kathmandu. On its second day it proclaimed *Nevāh De Dabū*, the National Forum of the Newars. The participants from various districts also suggested to make the organisation politically neutral. So they selected a new figure, Bhaktidas Shrestha, a religiously motivated Newar without political affiliations, as chairperson.<sup>54</sup> Five vice chairpersons representing each of the five development regions of Nepal.

### **The Problems of Newar Ethnicity**

With the creation of the National Forum of the Newars, the Newars have shown their eagerness to present themselves as a separate ethnic group or a nation within the modern state of Nepal, a country presenting itself as a single nation-state only during the last few decades.<sup>55</sup> For the present purpose it is important to realise that for the Newars, unlike for other nationalities of Nepal, it is not an easy task to unite and present themselves as an ethnic group. The caste system which once was an essential component of Newar society and culture, is rapidly losing its traditional values. Particularly the so called low-caste people, whose duties are still very important in various festivals as well as in life cycle and death rituals, are nowadays unwilling to continue their tasks. The Newars are known for their rich culture. In most festivals many castes participate and in such festivals each caste has to fulfil its own duties.<sup>56</sup> During the past decades cities like Kathmandu and even

smaller towns such as Sankhu have lost many *guthis* which used to fulfil different duties in different festivals. One of the main factors is economical: as soon as the land reform programme (1964) was implemented, many socio-religious associations (*guthis*) responsible for running such festivals, have partly or completely lost their traditional source of income. Their major income used to come from land endowments but nowadays the tenants are not anymore under their control.

At the same time, the popularity of modern luxuries like the television, video, car, motorcycle, concrete buildings and so on have changed life style of Nepalese in a great deal. Such commodities have become status symbols for most elite Newars, and the new generations are more interested in Western pop culture and Indian cinema than in their own music and culture.

In 1951, as soon as Rana family rule ended in Nepal, the valley of Kathmandu, the principal homeland of the Newars, was opened for the first time to the people from other parts of Nepal and to outsiders. Since then, the migration of people into the valley from other parts of Nepal, and from North India (mainly from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh), has continued. These migrants are going to outnumber and displace the Newars in their own land very soon. The influx of people from all over Nepal and North India, the growth of countless concrete buildings on the fertile land of the Valley, and the sharp increase in highly polluting motor traffic continue to be unchecked. As K.P. Malla observes:

With his social and cultural fabric of life slowly being destroyed, the average middle-class Newar of Kathmandu today feels like the displaced Nawabs of Lucknow after the loot (1992: 24).

A trend of speaking Nepali in Newar houses already started during the Rana period. First it was adopted by members of the Newar elites who used to serve the Rana palaces. After the downfall of the Ranas in 1951, more government aided public schools with Nepali as the medium of instruction were opened. High and middle class Newar parents were more inclined to speak Nepali with their children at the cost of their own mother tongue. They preferred to forsake their language in order to obtain better job opportunities in government service. At present the English language has captured the attention of the Nepalese including the Newars. Newar parents are eager to send their children to so-called English boarding schools which are mushrooming in most cities of Nepal nowadays. In 1991, when the first *Nepāl bhāṣā* medium school was opened, only a few Newar parents chose to send their children to this school. Most strikingly, most of these Newar

leaders who have been engaged in the Nepālbhāṣā and national movement, did not send their children to the first Nepālbhāṣā medium school either.<sup>57</sup>

The Newars outside the valley of Kathmandu, especially the new generations, have lost their ancestors' language because the trend of speaking Nepali at their home became more common among them. In most cases those Newars can be recognised only by their family or caste names. However, for a decade or so the Newars outside the valley have been attracted towards their past glory and the Nepālbhāṣā. Newars living in many places outside the valley are seeking to learn the Nepālbhāṣā by requesting to accomodate them teachers from the Valley. In the past few years, the Association of the Newar Speakers (*Nepālbhāṣā Maṃkāḥ Khalah*) has sent teachers to various places. Even from Sikkim Newar people have made contact with the Association to acquire Nepālbhāṣā teachers and school textbooks. The Newars of India organised a gathering in Kalimpong for the first time on December 2 and 3, 1995.<sup>58</sup> Even Newars living in the U.S.A. have formed their organisations like *Nepāḥ Pāsā Pucāḥ* (Nepal Friends Association 1991) and *International Nepālbhāṣā Sevā Samiti* (Internatinal Nepālbhāṣā Service Committee) and have launched their publications like *Dabu*, *Newāḥ Vijñāna* and *Swonigaa*. They also have initiated websites for a global network of the Newars.

In September 1995, when the National Forum of the Newars was founded, it was joined by participants from 38 districts. Those who participated have formed local organisations in their areas. All these organisations present themselves without any caste bias and try to associate with all Newar castes including the formally untouchable *Poḍe* caste. At the same time, there are some caste-based organisations within Newar society. In Kathmandu the Vajrācāryas (the Buddhist priestly caste), Uray (the Merchant castes like Tulādhār and Kansākār), Mānandhar (Oil pressers), Kapāli (Tailor and Musicians), Khaḍgi (Butchers), Poḍe (Sweepers), Citrakār (painters), as well as Tandukār have had their caste foundations for many years. In 1993 the biggest caste group in Newar society, the Jyāpus, the farmers of the Valley, established the Great Foundation of the Jyāpus (*Jyāpu Mahā Guthi*). At present these caste associations are playing a supportive role in forming Newar unity. The Great Foundation of the Jyāpus in particular is an achievement in itself, because in the past farmers had kept aloof from activities launched by the Newar elites. Virtually, in 1997 the Great Foundation of the Jyāpus (*Jyāpu Mahā Guthi*) split into two factions, however it manage to remain intact<sup>59</sup>. What will be the role of these caste-based organisations in the future is unpredictable since the traditional hierarchical order of castes is no longer appreciated by the depressed caste groups. Whether those caste-bound associations seek their separate identity or will become part of the Newar ethnic movement is not yet clear.

In the recent past, Newar people have been debating the creation of a new party of their own. If we read two Nepālbhāṣā dailies *Sandhyā Times* and *Viśvabhūmī* over the past years, we find a number of articles which indicate this trend. Newar leaders such as Malla K. Sunder, Keshavman Sakya and Nareshbir Sakya advocated the formation of a Newar ethnic party. How effective an ethnically-based party will be is very difficult to assess because even a prominent Newar leader like Padmaratna Tuladhar is not in favour of such a party. From the viewpoint of present politics not only the Newars but all other ethnic groups are divided into as many factions as there are political parties. Shortly before the local election in 1997, *Nevāḥ Rāṣṭriya Āndolan Samanvaya Samīti* (The Newar National Movement Coordination Committee) emerged. It aimed at organising the Newars politically and ethnically to fight for equal rights of their language and nation. However, its attempt to field ethnically motivated candidates in the Kathmandu Valley during the 1997 local elections did not succeed. It was found that the Newar politicians preferred to contest the election according to their political affiliations rather than in ethnic terms.

### Challenges to Newar Ethnicity

Before the Gorkha conquest, the Valley of Nepal was a melting pot for the migrants of the people from the north and south. The culture, language, religions, rituals and traditions of the valley had successfully been assimilating people who had been migrating into the valley for centuries. As a consequence of the Gorkha conquest the assimilation process stopped. Especially after the proclamation of the 1854 legal code, the Newars of the valley were subordinated to the ruling ethnic group, the Parbates.

Even so, the rise of ethnic awareness among the Newars is a relatively new phenomenon. During the Nepālbhāṣā movement of the renaissance period (1899-1940), the writers did not yet perceive a Newar ethnicity. The writers of those days did not promote Newar nationalism as such. Many Newars used to write not only in Nepālbhāṣā but also in Nepali. Many contemporary Nepālbhāṣā and Nepali writers also used to gather at the same place, as is clear by the evidence of Yogvir's cloth shop.<sup>60</sup> The necessity of social reforms mainly motivated Newar writers of those days. With a few exceptions,<sup>61</sup> their writings were a far cry from the modern sense of ethnic awareness. Since education was beyond the reach of the general public, educated people with the ability to read literature were not many. Yet, the Rana government was frightened especially by the Nepālbhāṣā writings, and not so much by other languages. They feared the power of expression against them in that language as it was the language of the majority population of the Valley. Their fear was political and not based on the danger of a language

movement or ethnic uprisings. They suppressed Nepālbhāṣā writers to silence the vocal population of the Kathmandu Valley because they knew that if the people of the Valley would turn against their tyrannical rule, it would become impossible for them to remain in power. For the same reason, the Rana government granted privileges to the Newars by appointing them to administrative, judicial and other posts. These cautious concessions were issued in order to please the Newars so that they would support the Ranas.

As soon as the Rana government adopted a liberal policy towards Nepālbhāṣā publications in 1946, the Newar writers were satisfied. When the 1951 political change gave them more freedom to write and publish books they were very pleased. Against this background it is puzzling that in 1959 Nepali alone was declared the National language of Nepal at the cost of all other languages of Nepal. Later the *Panchayat System* followed the same monolithic policy for 30 years by ignoring the existence of all other languages of Nepal. The continuous deprivation by the State pushed Nepālbhāṣā from the most important language of the country to a minor one.

In spite of the continuous negligence from the side of the State, Newar people have not shown any violent reaction throughout history. The literary activities of several decades assumed an ethnic shape only at the beginning of the 1980s. And even then, it took the Newars 15 more years to create 'The National Forum of the Newars' (Nevāḥ De Dabū 1995). The National Forum still has to gain unanimous support from all Newars. When the preparation for the formation of The National Forum was in progress, one group of Newars, politically close to the *Nepali Congress*, formed the *Prajātāntrik Nepālbhāṣā Khalah* (The Association of Democratic Newars) led by Hitkarvir Sing Kansakar, another well known figure in the Nepālbhāṣā movement. They accused the supposedly national organisation of being controlled by the left, and alleged accusation that the draft constitution of the proposed national organisation was undemocratic because it was written to fulfil the interests of left-inclined Newars.<sup>62</sup>

The National Forum of the Newars was composed of the representatives from various Newar settlements having all sorts of political background. The leaders of the convention claim that the newly formed 'The National Forum of the Newars' should not be controlled by politicians. In 1996, the first regional meeting of the executive body took place in Jhapa, eastern Nepal. The final version of the constitution of The National Forum was also passed on this occasion. Different political leaders, including a Newar *Nepali Congress* leader like Ramhari Joshi participated. The members of the Democratic Newars Association have not yet shown any interest in joining The National Forum. Instead they are trying to create their own separate branches all over the country to create a parallel national organisation. In a similar manner

*Nevāh Guthi* and *Nepāl Nevār Samāj* (The Newar Society of Nepal) and *Nevāh Mahā Guthi* (The Great Trust of the Newars 1997) are also busy in their own way to organise the Newars of the country under their own umbrellas. Whether all these Newar organisations can co-operate with each other or are dividing the Newar national movement into several fragments is an important question today.

As an ethnic Newar national organisation, 'The National Forum of the Newars' must be able to keep equal distance from all political parties. In practice this is the most challenging job for the Newar nationalists; their success or failure depends on it. Examining the differences in political views among the Newars leads to the inevitable conclusion that an ethnic political party is unlikely to be formed in the short run. It is because many Newars are occupying higher and lower posts in almost all big and small political parties of Nepal.

Another major challenge for Newar nationalism is the caste system, which has given the Newars a distinct identity. Since the 1964 legal code has made all castes of Nepal equal before the law, the caste system within Newar society has lost some of its traditional importance. The caste system in Newar society is a delicate phenomenon. On the one hand, caste co-operation is essential for the continuation of Newar cultural tradition, while, on the other hand, the hierarchical order of the traditional caste system is a strong divisive force. During the celebration of traditional feasts, festivals, and rituals, caste-based duties are still very important. In Sankhu, the butcher caste that played music during funeral processions stopped their duties; since then there is no music in the funeral processions, because it is impossible to replace them by any other caste. Nowadays, in growing metropolitan cities like Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur the traditional value of caste does not count for very much, but in a small town like Sankhu caste discrimination is still going on. There, the so-called lowest caste, the *Pode*, and other low caste groups such as *Nāy* and *Jogī*, are still suffering from discrimination. However, from the so-called highest caste (Brahmins) to the so-called lowest caste (*Pode*) all are identified as Newars, because of their culture and language. Still it is a hard task to unite them for the cause of Newar nationalism because their culture is not based on equality among the various castes. Whether the Newars will be able to develop a feeling of equality among all castes or not is a vital question today. The Newars can no longer maintain their cultural traditions if the stigmatised low castes are not treated equally with other high castes. At present, all Newar nationalist organisations are busy trying to accommodate members in their organisations without caste bias. However, the abolition of caste hierarchy in Newar society is not an easy task.

When we talk about Newar national movement it is necessary to take into account the position of women in Newar society. Newar women are being considered one of the most educated and most forward groups in Nepal. However, the conservative Newar society does not permit them to participate in social activities. Most Newar women are being confined to their household duties. The place of women in Newar society is being extremely subordinated to men. Especially, married women are being highly discriminated in their homes.<sup>63</sup> Together with men, it is essential that Newar women also join their hands with their male counter parts to turn their national movement a success. At present, most Newar women are miles away from any such activities. So far, a few city dwelling educated women are being assimilated in different Newar organisations, but their representation is insignificantly low. A few years ago, a group of Newar women founded a Newar Women's Association, the *Nepālbhāsā Misā Khalah* (1989) in Kathmandu, but this Association is mainly concentrated among literary circles than with women. Whether the Newar nationalists will succeed in receiving active support from Newar women or not is an important question, because without an active support from women their movement may hardly achieve a success.

The Valley of Kathmandu is no longer the homeland of only the Newars. People migrated from all over Nepal and India have made them a minority in their traditional homeland. The loss of traditional trade areas as well as that of traditional land ownership have also disrupted Newar society. The Newars, who once were the masters of trade, are no longer in that position. They are being gradually displaced by the Indian merchants and, now, because of the so-called free market economy, Newar traders are losing even more than before. The competition for bread and butter to survive hardly allows them to foster their traditional values. During the past two centuries the Newars of the Valley have also migrated extensively to other parts of the country and beyond. In most areas they need to mix with other ethnic groups, have lost contact with the centre, and may well forget their language and culture. To inspire all these Newars with nationalistic feeling is more or less impracticable.

The growing intrusions of foreign cultures and languages into Newar society might in the long run eliminate both their language and culture. To overcome these challenges, the Newar leaders have not yet made any far-sighted plans and policies.

### Conclusion

From the above discussions it becomes clear that the unity of the Newars is being acquired more from their language than from any other factors. The formulation of their unity has much more to do with the cause of language

rights than with ethnic ambition. The Newars' endeavour to form a national organisation could gain momentum only because the state has continuously been neglecting their language. Still the Newars have a long way to go for consolidating a unanimous Newar organisation. In Nepal, after Maithili Nepālbhāṣā is a language with a long tradition of literature, which can easily be made another official language in the Kathmandu Valley. The Newars' attempt to unite ethnically may not be necessary, if Nepālbhāṣā is again recognised as an official language, so that the Newars can use their language in court, in administration of the Valley as well as in education. The recent order of the Supreme Court to refrain from using Nepālbhāṣā in Kathmandu Metropolis, and Maithili from Rajbiraj and Dahnusha Municipalities and District Development Committees is not a good sign. It clearly indicates the sole patronisation of Nepali language against all other languages of Nepal. This sort of circumstances can only provoke non-Nepali speaking people and ultimately may turn very costly to Nepal. In any case, if the right of autonomy to nationalities in Nepal is accomplished, the Newars are at the most favourable place as the major inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley.

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### Notes

1. According to the population census of Nepal 1991. The census report also shows that the different ethnic groups of Nepal do no longer maintain their mother tongues. The census reports are criticised however by many Nepalese and foreign scholars for not presenting accurate data.



See His Majesty's Government (HMG) (Central Bureau of Statistics) CBS 1995. *POPULATION CENSUS -1991* Table 14 Population by Caste/Ethnic groups/Sex & Age groups for Geographical region (pp. 236-311), see HMG CBS 1993 *POPULATION CENSUS -1991* for population by Mother Tongue, Sex and Age Groups of Development Regions and Districts (page 163-324), see also HMG CBS 1995 *Statistical Year Book of Nepal 1995*. Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics. (pp. 26-40.) For the criticism on the CBS data by various scholars see *Nepal* Vol. 39 no. 58 1991. Shrestha 1999 points out an example of Suntol VDC of Sankhu, where the CBS data deducts almost half of the Newar speakers' number only to add it to the number of the Nepali speakers.

2. Many songs written by the Shah kings are collected in Tuladhar 1981. *Pulāṃgu Mya* (old songs).
3. *Mahāsatvapyākhyān*, a three act play written by King Rajendra, has been published in 1967.
4. Jang Bahadur, a Kunwar, who claims to descent from Ranas of Chittorh became the first Rana prime minister in Nepal. He not only managed to hold on to power for the rest of his life but ensured that it remained with the Kunwars afterward. See Whelpton, J. (1991: 185-97) *Kings Soldiers and Priests Nepalese Politics 1830-1857* Delhi: Manohar.
5. Janaklal Vaidya has written that the prohibition of Newari from the court was already declared in 1854 A.D., but K.P. Malla remarks that the document mentioned by Vaidya unfortunately cannot be traced. He confirms Cittadhar Hridaya's statement about the 1905 ban. See Hridaya, C. 1982 *Jhīgu Sāhitya*. Kathmandu: Nepalbhāṣā Paṛiṣad p.7, and Malla, K.P. 1978. *Bibliography of Nepalbhasa*. Kathmandu: Layatādabu. p. 5. It is more likely that Jangabahadur may have orally ordered such measures and no written documents were kept. Acarya Narendradev mentions in his book *Baudha Dharma Darśan* (Buddhist Religious Philosophy) the seize of old texts from monastery by the Prime minister Jangabahadur. He further writes a British residential doctor in Kathmandu, (Daniel?) Wright, collected and presented those books to Cambridge University, which were seized from the monastery, and thrown out on the street by Jangabahadur. See [Acarya 1994 (1956): 123]. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, see also (Shrestha 1990: 123).
6. See Lienhard 1992(1972). *The Songs of Nepal An Anthology of Nevār Folksongs and Hymns*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas p. 4.
7. See Acarya, B. 1953. "Nepāl Nevār and Nevār Bhāṣā" *Nepāl Saṃskritic Paṛiṣad* 1(1): 1-16. See also Mali, I. 1978. "Nepāl bhāṣāyā Chum Dasu"

- (Some Examples of Newari) in his book *Jhigu Bhay: Jhigu Khamgva* pp. 14-18.
8. For detailed discussion on the word *Nepāl* see Malla, K.P. 1983a. "Nepal Archaeology of the Word" *Nepal Heritage Society Souvenir* PATA Nepal Conference. pp. 63-69.
  9. Vajracarya, D.V. and K.P. Malla. 1985. *The Gopālarājavamśāvalī* Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner. pp 121-122.
  10. See Malla, K.P. 1983b. "River Names of the Nepal valley: A Study in cultural Annexation." *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, 10(1-2): 57-68. see also Malla. 1981 "Linguistic Archeology of the Nepal Valley A Preliminary Report" *Kailash* 8 (1-2): 5-23 and Malla 1996 "The Profane Names of the Sacred Hillocks" *CNS* 23(1): 1-9. M. Witzel (1980: 326) also saw the possibility of them being early form of Newari however he preferred to call them "Kirāti."
  11. K.P. Malla (1990: 15-26) has analysed the palm leaf from the linguistic point of view.
  12. See Malla *Classical Newari Literature A Sketch* 1982. See also Vaidya and Kamsakār *A Descriptive Catalogue of Selected Manuscripts* 1991.
  13. D. Sakya strongly disapproves to be called 'Newari' to 'Nepālbhāṣā'. See Sakya 1997.
  14. Many scholars have discussed this subject. See Doherty (1978: 434), van Kooij *Religion in Nepal* 1978, Gellner *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest. Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual* 1996.
  15. See D. Quigley "Ethnicity Without Nationalism: The Newars of Nepal." *Archive European Sociology*. xxviii, 1987: 52-170.
  16. See Giuseppe, F. 1794 "Account of the Kingdom of Nepal" *Asiatic Researches* vol. II, pp. 241-253 Calcutta. (Reprint New Delhi 1970 pp. 307-322), which gives eye witness reports of the barbarous acts of the Gorkha invaders upon the Newars after their victory over Nepal. Kirkpatrick has reprinted extract from Father Giuseppe's "Account of Nepal". See Kirkpatrick 1975(1811): 380-86, Appendix. No. III. However, 20th century Nepali historiographers such as B. Acarya, D.R. Regmi, S. Gyawali dismiss such incidents. But Stiller (1989: 33-34) argues their rejections are not based on evidence and confirms Giuseppe's account. See also Pradhan 1991: 104-5.
  17. Newar settlements like Dolkha already existed outside the Valley from the early Malla period, but extensive migration of the Newars began after the 1769 Gorkha conquest. See Gellner 1986: 102; Lewis and Sakya "Contribution to the History of Nepal: Eastern Newar Diaspora Settlements." *CNS* 15:1, 1988: 25-65.
  18. See HMG CBS Population Census 1991, (1993: 236-311).

19. See also Gellner (1986) for "Language, Caste Religion and Territory: Newar identity ancient and modern." See Rosser. C. 1979 (1966) for "Social Mobility in the Newar Caste system." In C.von Furer-Haimendorf (ed.) *Caste & Kin in Nepal, India & Ceylon Anthropological Studies in Hindu-Buddhist Contact Zones*. New Delhi: East-West Publications, 68-139.
20. For a detailed analysis of the 1854 legal code of Nepal see Hofer (1979). *The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal. A study of the Muluki Ain of 1854*. Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner.
21. J. Whelpton has discussed in his book about the appointments of Newars in various influential administrative posts. See Whelpton 1991: 165, 203, 228.
22. In December 1885, when the first meeting of the Indian National Congress took place in Bombay only seventy delegates participated. By 1900 the Congress had grown into a position of constitutional opposition to the Government. See Percival, S. 1970 (1960). *A History of India*. Middlesex: Penguin Books. pp. 170-1.
23. The name 'Nepali' was first made popular outside Nepal. Only in the 1930s the rulers of the country recognised it. See Burghart 1996: 253, see also Pradhan 1991: 203. In a similar manner, the word 'Newari' was designated to 'Nepālbhāṣā' by western scholars a long before it was adopted by anybody in Nepal. (See Shakyā 1997).
24. See Tamot, K (1985: 1) *Gadhyaguru Paṇḍit Nisthānanda Vajrācārya va Vayakayā Lalitavistar* (The Master of Prose: Pandit Nisthananda Vajracarya and His 'Lalitvistar') Kathmandu: Cakanā Sahitya Pālā.
25. For detail see Hridaya 1982: 25-36, see also Tamot 1985.
26. See Kansakar, T. (1997: 11) "The Newar Language: A Profile" *Newāh Vijñāna A Journal of Newar Studies* I(I): 11-37.
27. *Ārya Samāj* is a Hindu reform movement based on Vedānta philosophy. It was established by Svami Dayananda Saraswati in India in 1875 (Percival 1970: 164). In Nepal it was established by Madhavraj Joshi in 1920.
28. For more detail see Hridaya 1982: 83-92, Lakaul 1988, Piwaju and Malla 1984.
29. Nepālī poets like Lekhnath Paudyal, Sambhuprasad, Cakrapani Calise, Laksmiprasad Devakota used to gather in his shop. All of them later became prominent literary figures in Nepali literature. See (Hridaya 1982: 95).
30. For "Brave 'Bir' History of Nepali Literature." see Onta 1996; 37-76.
31. For detail on Dharmaditya see Lakaul 1984: 19-42.

32. Those who were in favour equal rights for other languages, cultures and ethnic groups of Nepal began to call this policy 'Khas chauvinism.'
33. In Nepal, the solar-based Vikram calendar is in official use. The Newar people's New Year celebration is based on Nepāl Samvat or Nepāladeśiya Samvat, the 'Era of the country Nepal' as it has been put by the official calendar committee of Nepal. Since it is called Nepāl Samvat their demand is to recognise it as a national era. As the demand came from the Newars it has been labelled as the Nevāri Samvat by many non-Newar people. Nepāl Samvat was founded on Thursday, October 20, 879, and it is believed that the founder was a merchant Śaṃkhaḍhar at the time of King Rāghavadeva. See Slusser (1982: 389) for more on Nepāl Samvat. See also Vajracarya and Malla (1985: 236).
34. Toffin 1996 draws such examples from ritual and historical contexts, see also van den Hoek 1993.
35. See *Bhintunā Pau*, 1993 a souvenir published by *Nepālbhāṣā Maṃkāh Khalah* (NMK), the Association of Newar Speakers.
36. See Shrestha 1995: 448-456 for "Newari Journalism Past present and Future."
37. However, the government does not shoulder any responsibilities to make mother tongue education available to any non-Nepali languages speaking people of Nepal. See *The Constitution of Nepal 1990*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Justice, HMG.
38. See Report of the National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission 1994 (Rāṣṭriya Bhāṣā Nīti Sujhāva Āyog).
39. See Tamang 1987 p. 73, Fisher 1993 p. 11-14.
40. These demands were presented by M.M. Shrestha in a leaflet distributed at the first convention of the Newars on September 1, 1995. See "The Necessity of Newar National Movement and its Path" in *Sandhyā Times*, a Newari daily 1997 May 1, vol.2 no. 179.
41. More on Tamang language situation, see Verenkamp, B.N. 1996 *Tamang Tam A Sociolinguistic Study of Eastern Tamang Dialects (in Nepal)* Kathmandu: CNAS. See also S.K. Sonntag 1995 "Ethnolinguistic Identity and Language Policy in Nepal" for Tamang and Tharu identity.
42. See "Manifesto of The All Nepal Nationalities Organisation" in *Janajāti* 1997 1(1):7-10.
43. More on the autonomy right see Shrestha, M.L. 1998 "Sarbocca Adālatayā Antarim Ādeśa va Jātiya Svaśāsan" (Stay Order of the Supreme Court and the National Autonomy) [in Newari] *Sandhyā Times* April 7-10, .

44. See Shrestha, B. (1990). for "Bāma-Kāmgresa Sarakārayā Bhāṣā Nītiyā Sambhandhay" (A critique on the policy of the united government of Left and Nepālī Congress) [In Newari] *Ināp* 8: 28, 3.
45. See *Janajāti* 1997, 1(1): 8.
46. Although it has still to be proved the CPN Maoist also succeed at forming an association of the Newars, the *Nevāh Khalah*, as its sister organisation. The *Nevāh Khalah* called a Valley banda (strike) on 5 March 1999, it was the first time that an ethnically based organisation called a banda in Nepal. See *The Kathmandu Post* 6 March, 1999.
47. Kathmandu Municipality used Newari as a medium from 1957 to 1961, with the introduction of Panchayat System in 1961 it stopped to do so. (see Shrestha 1996: 2).
48. See Tamot, K. 1997. "On Writ Against Newari in the Court" In *Deṣeymaru Jhyāh* 4:30, 2.
49. See *The Kathmansdu Post*, an English daily, March 19, 1998.
50. The papers and discussions presented at the conference are collected in *Nepāl* 1991, 39: 58.
51. See Vaidya and Kasa 1991, also Sakya 1996.
52. The chairman of the Association P. Tuladhar, who claims to be an independent leftist himself, was close to Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist), as a sincere Newar leader he was not that controversial, but in the second convention of the Association when many members of CPN (UML) appeared to capture executive posts it aroused heavy controversy. More about Padmaratna. see Gellner and Sharkey (1996: 37-46).
53. One faction took the flag of the Foundation in a political rally of the Nepali Congress, a major political party of Nepal, which was a new development for the ethnic associations in Nepal. Before this incident there was no evidence of any ethnic organisation taking part in a party politics (see Shrestha, 1996: 2).
54. As an elderly religious man, Bhaktidas Shrestha is not an active person in any political associations, so the Newars' gathering found him uncontroversial to made him the chairman of the National Forum.
55. See Burghart 1996 for "The formation of the Concept of Nation-State in Nepal" in his book *The conditions of Listening. Essays on Religion, History and Politics in South Asia*. (eds ) C.J. Fuller and Jonathan Spencer. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
56. For "Intercaste Relationship in a Newar Community" see Toffin 1978: 461-481.

57. On the first Newari school see Shrestha, B.G. and A.W. van den Hoek 1995. 'Education in the Mother Tongue; the Case of Nepālbhāṣā (Newari)' *Contributions to the Nepalese Studies*. 22:1, 73-86.
58. See news published in *Sandhyā Times* (a Newari daily), December 29, 1995.1: 58.
59. In 1997, one of its dissatisfied member created a parallel Jyāpu Mahā Guthi, later he joined to mother organisation. Personal communication with Dr. Pancha Narayan Maharjan of CNAS, TU who is a member of Jyāpu Mahāguthi.
60. See above note no. 25.
61. See above mentioned (p.11) Siddhidas's quotation.
62. See commentary by Pradip Shrestha, the founder general secretary of *Prajātāntrik Nepālbhāṣā Khalah* and the editor of *Desaymarujhyāh*, a Newari weekly. August 24, 1995, vol. 2 no. 32. This weekly has continuously published views against the left predominance in Newar organisations from the beginning of its publication in 1994. Recently Gellner has lengthily discussed the political affiliations of the Newars. See Gellner 1997 (151-184).
63. For a critical assessment of economical situation of Newar women see K. N. Rankin (1999: chapter 5) *The Cultural Politics of Markets: Economic Liberalisation and the Challenge for Social Planning in Nepal* A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Cornell University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## **RESEARCH NOTE**

### **NEPALESE IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**Ramesh K. Dhungel**

#### **Introduction**

The Nepalese immigrants in the United States comprise a comparatively small community, representing the diversity of Nepalese ethnic backgrounds. Culturally, these encompass the three geographical areas of Nepal, popularly known as the Himal (high mountainous region bordering the Tibetan autonomous region of China), Pahad (middle hills), and Tarai (southern flat area bordering India). Despite their geographic, linguistic, and ethnic diversities, Nepalese immigrants in the US are collectively known by a single group name 'Nepali'. The word Nepali stands for both the people and the lingua-franca of present day Nepal, a country situated between the two giants of Asia, China and India.

The Nepalese people are also known as the Gurkhas or Gorkhalese since the time of the British colonial regime in India. The origin of this national label derives from early colonial writers' attempts to link the history of Nepal with the original unifier of the country, King Prithvīnārāyaṇa Shah of Gorkha (of Western Nepal) and his Gorkhali people.

The predominant sub-groups among the Nepalese immigrants are the Bahun-Chhetris including Thakuris, Newars, and the Bhotias (Sherpa and other high Himalayan people) respectively.

#### **Definition**

The common traits of Nepalese immigrants are classified by their original Nepali nationality, languages, and cultures. Generally, Nepali is the main language of communication within the Nepalese communities, even though they also use other ethnic languages of Nepal such as Newari, Sherpa, Tamang, Gurung etc. The physical features of Nepalese immigrants varies according to their geographical and ethnic origins.

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Nepalese of Bhotia origin (Himalayan highlanders) are considered Mongoloid by their ethnic origin. Their physical feature is very similar to those of Tibetans. Therefore, they are also known as Tibeto-Mongolians. This community comprises different subgroups such as Sherpa, Gurung, Tamang, Kirati, Magar, and the other Himalayan origin people.

The People representing the Pahad (middle hills) are basically Bahun-Chhetris and Newars. Among them, Newars are mainly from the Kathmandu Valley. This community comprises both Hindus and Buddhists by religious beliefs and Indo-Aryan and Mongoloid by physical features, although the Newars are a highly syncretized group with their own language, popularly known as Newari.

Originally, the Bahun-Chhetris were from the sub-tropical hill areas of Nepal. Anthropologists believe they belong to the Caucasoid Indo-Aryan family. They are physically similar to North Indian people, but because of their long time and continuous habitation in remote mountain regions, they have evolved distinctly from the North Indians as seen particularly in their lighter skin and other physical features.

The Tarai people, also known as Madheshe, are from the southern tropical plains, known as Tarai or Madesh. Culturally they are very similar to the Indians of Bihar and Uttarpradesha. Their languages (Maithili, Bhojpuri, Avadi, Tharu etc.) and physical features are quite similar to the Indians of bordering areas and in some cases difficult to distinguish. By the effort of linguistic integration process of Nepal in the past several decades (1960s-1980s) the Tarai people are also able to communicate in Nepali National language.

### **Immigration and Settlement History**

The history of Nepalese Immigration to the US is a recent phenomenon in comparison to most of other Asian and South Asian countries. The earliest Nepalese visit to the US as non immigrant was during the 1940s and records indicate that the first Nepalese obtained a permanent residentship in 1952. A gradual increase in the number of Nepalese immigrants began only after 1956/57, but even today, the total number of Nepalese in the US is relatively small.

The main deterrents for earlier Nepalese immigration into the US were: (a) the Nepalese government's internal restrictive policy, (b) the absence of diplomatic relationship between Nepal and the United States until 1947, and (c) lack of Nepal's access to the Western material culture and languages. Nepal's difficult geopolitical situation has determined the scope and nature of the country's foreign policy and foreign contact through the ages. After the signing of Anglo-Nepal treaty of 1816 Nepal became virtually closed to

all foreigners except Britishers and the Nepalese were legally prohibited to emigrate except to India. This restriction became even tighter after the establishment of Rana autocratic rule in 1846 which lasted for more than a century. The close alliance between British India and the autocratic Rana regime of Nepal became a barrier for Nepalese seeking contact with the Western world. Nepal was able to establish diplomatic relationship with the US only after Indian Independence in 1947.

In 1951, the Rana regime was overthrown and Nepal became a democratic country. Consequently, Nepal's contact with the outside world increased gradually for the next decade. But with the Royal coup of 1960 and sudden collapse of parliamentary democracy Nepalese immigration once again became very difficult. The number of Nepalese immigrants to the US increased significantly, only after the restoration of democracy in Nepal, in 1990. The lottery system implemented by the US government has facilitated immensely the immigration process for Nepalese in the 1990s.

Further causes for the late arrival and small number of Nepalese immigrants in the US are: Nepal's economic disadvantage, poor literacy rates, lack of compulsory education, the physical distance, and cultural and linguistic disparities. The requirement of High-School diploma or occupational skills or experience still prevents common Nepalese from obtaining immigrant visa.

Effectively, Nepalese were prevented at least indirectly from immigrating to the US by the Immigration and Naturalization policy of the US itself. The past policy of immigration quota system by continents prevented Nepalese from coming in considerable number, since the Asian limit was largely filled by other Asian émigrés from the countries like India, China, Pakistan, Philippines, Korea etc. Because such a small group of Nepalese Immigrants in this country at present, the relatives who could come under the First, Second, Fourth, and Fifth preferences of the 1965 Amendment Act would also be limited. The system favouring family reunification also after all became favorable only for those countries who had supplied big number of people already to the US and not for coming more Nepalese here.

Nepalese immigrants who came to the US prior to the late eighties are mostly highly educated and technically trained people, but the new lottery system of the US has brought relatively less educated Nepalese as well. In comparison to the immigrants of other Asian countries, Nepalese are still better educated. Because, in Nepal, very common and less educated people can not even get access to apply for lottery or regular visa applications. Nor can they meet the expenses for pre departure arrangement.

In the US, Nepalese immigrants are mainly centered around the, big cities and where renowned universities are located. States like CA, NY,

MD, IL, TX, MI, NJ, Metropolitan D.C. area, and VA have relatively big number of Nepalese Immigrant population.

Since only a few Nepalese Americans and permanent residents of the first generation are now close to their retirement age there is no existing evidence of circular and return immigration of the Nepalese yet. Still in consideration of Nepalese immigrants' psychology one may predict this to occur in the future. Second generation Nepalese Americans, pursuing higher education or are in the beginning stage of their professional fields do not in general consider returning to their ancestral home land. The reasons are: a. they are accustomed to the American way of life and material facilities; b. there is still no evidence of any growing infrastructure for economic development in Nepal that would attract such a sophisticated individuals born, educated, and trained in a technologically most advance country in the world.

### **Demographic Facts**

Even today Nepalese constitute only about five hundredths of one percent of the total Asian and about four tenth of one percent of total South Asian immigrants in the US. Nepal has not been included in any category as a separate Nation in the Year Book published every year by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service. The library's documentation center at the Bureau of the Census of the US Government does not have the most current statistics on Nepalese immigrants as the numbers are insignificant in comparison to the immigrants of other countries. Although there are more than 18000 Nepalese now living in the US, only 2433 of them are recorded as having been admitted to the US between 1952 and 1993 by the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the US as permanent residents. The ratio of Nepalese immigrants has been increased more steadily in the 1990s mainly because of the new lottery quota system executed by the US Government. In this lottery system the population giants of Asia like China and India have been excluded from illegible list of the countries and in place of them other countries' quota has been increased. Thus, at least a total number of 860 Nepalese have been admitted as permanent resident only between the period of 1990 and 1993. Therefore, including the assuming number of 1994 and 1995 by the same ratio of 1993 the total estimated number of the Nepalese immigrants now could be figured around 3000 or little more who are either in a permanent visa status or the naturalized citizen of the US. Among them, around 53% are male and 47% are female.



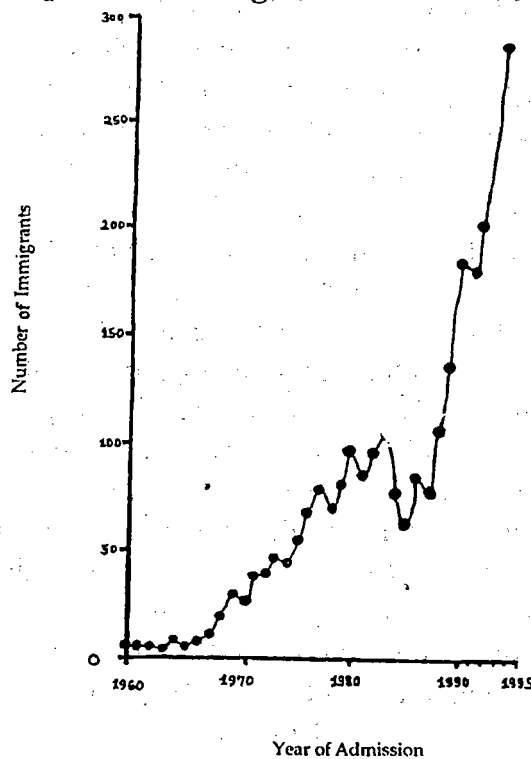
**Nepalese immigrants admitted to the United States from the beginning to the year 1993**

| Year    | Number | Year | Number | Year | Number |
|---------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|
| 1952    | 1      | 1967 | 9      | 1980 | 95     |
| 1953-55 | 0      | 1968 | 19     | 1981 | 83     |
| 1956    | 1      | 1969 | 32     | 1982 | 97     |
| 1957    | 5      | 1970 | 25     | 1983 | 105    |
| 1958    | 0      | 1971 | 40     | 1984 | 75     |
| 1959    | 4      | 1972 | 39     | 1985 | 63     |
| 1960    | 4      | 1973 | 46     | 1986 | 86     |
| 1961    | 5      | 1974 | 43     | 1987 | 78     |
| 1962    | 5      | 1975 | 56     | 1988 | 106    |
| 1963    | 3      | 1976 | 68     | 1989 | 134    |
| 1964    | 7      | 1977 | 80     | 1990 | 184    |
| 1965    | 4      | 1978 | 68     | 1991 | 174    |
| 1966    | 8      | 1979 | 79     | 1992 | 206    |
|         |        |      |        | 1993 | 296    |

Total number: 2433

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census and U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Computer file, ICPSR, 1993.

**Nepalese Immigration 1960-1993**



The Nepalese immigrants in the US are a composition of people from three different geographical regions and diverse ethnic origins, they can be categorized in five tentative sub groups such as Bahun-Chhetris, Newars, Tibeto-Mongoloid Himalayan people, Tarai or Madhese people, and others.

Bahun-Chhetris are the people originally from the middle hills of Nepal having Indo-Aryan Hindu origins. This is the largest group constituting about 45% of the total Nepalese Immigrant population in the US. The second largest group is the Newar community from the Kathmandu Valley. This constitutes about 40% of total Nepalese population in America. The Newars represent both Indo-Aryan Hindu and Buddhist communities of the Kathmandu Valley. Until late 1980s the third largest group comprised the people from Southern plains of Nepal, the Tarai or Madhese people. But in the 1990s, immigrants from the Himalayan highlands people of Bhotia origins have increased quite rapidly and have become the third largest Nepalese immigrant population, pushing the Tarai group down into a fourth category. The Himalayan Bhotia origin group now constitutes about 10% whereas the Terai's Madhese group constitutes only about 5% of the total Nepalese population in the US. The last group, under the title others, is the population of the low caste Hindus which in fact does not make any percent at all because the total number of this group is very small.

The mailing lists of different regional Nepalese communities in the US produced and distributed by different Nepalese Associations and organizations show that the Bahun-Chhetri group consists about eighty different family names popularly known as *thara* in Nepali. Similarly, The Newar, the Himalayan Bhotia, and the Tarai groups consist of about 40, 17, and 16 different *tharas* respectively. Among them, Thāpā, Pāṇde, Sharmā Upādhyāy, and Rānā from the Bahun-Chhetri group; Shreṣṭha, Pradhān, Rājbandāry, and Shākya from Newar group; Sherpā, Lāmā, and Gurung from the Himalayan group have the bigger size of population.

In terms of generation status, most Nepalese American families are still in their first generation, although a small number of second generation Nepalese are now surfacing. Since the major portion of Nepalese immigrants is first generation and their coming to the USA is a very recent phenomenon, the birth rate for Nepalese Americans, 1.5, will not contribute to population growth. But a considerable increase in the number of new immigrants has been recorded since 1968. In total, there were only .56 Nepalese immigrants prior to the year 1968. But, after the execution of new immigration amendments passed by the US Congress in 1965 phasing out the old quota system, the number of Nepalese to acquire permanent residency has increased from 19 in 1968 to 296 in 1993, cumulating at 2433 Nepalese immigrants. There is no separate yearly data available after

(covering the data of the years between 1956 and 1993 plus the rough estimate of the years 1994 and 1995), the average ratio of yearly admittance could be calculated as no less than 71 individuals.

In terms of spatial distribution the greater population of Nepalese have settled the states of NY, CA, MD, IL, TX, VA, MI, NJ, and FL. Surprisingly, the major portion of the Himalayan origin Nepalese have settled almost exclusively in big cities such as NY, San Francisco, and Seattle only.

Since the major portion of Nepalese in America is new comer and of first generation, by the age factor, Nepalese immigrants are relatively young. Most of the immigrants arrived in and after 1980s are still under the age of 50 and those who arrived before that time are also not older than the age of 70.

### **Language**

Although they belong to different ethnic, lingual, and cultural backgrounds Nepali is the primary language of communication within most of the Nepalese in the US. Most Nepalese whose native language is not Nepali, can still understand, speak, read, and write Nepali. Since most of them have at least a High School degree prior to their coming to the US, which requires a certain level of fluency in writing and reading Nepali. Nepali is the mother tongue of the Nepalese of middle hill origin people of Nepal whereas the native language of other Nepalese is different. For example, most of the Newars from Kathmandu valley speak Newari as their mother tongue and the Nepalese of Tarai origin speak either Maithili, Bhojpurī, Avadi or Thāru language as their mother tongue. Similarly, those of Himalayan Mongol origin people use different dialects of Tibetan origin like Sherpa (Tibetan?) Gurung, Tamang, Magar, Kirat (Rai and Limbu) etc.

Although they continue to use ethnic native languages, some of the Nepalese immigrants prefer to use English or to be bilingual and in some cases trilingual- using native, Nepali, and English languages. Most of the Nepalese Americans speak both Nepali and English fluently. Those Nepalese professionals educated in Western schools either in Nepal or else where use English as their primary language. Similarly, new generation of Nepalese American uses English as their first language and it is likely the Nepali language will become an occasional and that other ethnic languages may disappear in the time of subsequent generations. There are already a good number of Nepalese families who speak exclusively English from the time of their arrival in the US. In these cases it is possible that even Nepali fluency will disappear by the next generation. Nepalese Americans are developing a demeaning attitude toward Nepali and other native ethnic

languages of Nepal. Unlike other nationalities such as Latinos, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Indians, Nepalese immigrants in general do not feel pride in maintaining their languages. This is due to the smallness of Nepali community and the lack of professional and social utility for the Nepali and other ethnic languages of Nepal in the US. Unfortunately, no decisive programs have been developed to maintain and promote the Nepali and other ethnic languages of Nepal nor the Nepalese immigrants have established their own ethnic press. However, there are some Nepalese organizations planning to open Nepalese Cultural Centre and conduct Nepali language and cultural classes. A Nepali literary association - the International Nepali Literary Society has been established in the metropolitan Washington DC area with a humble goal of promoting Nepali language and literature which also publishes a bi-monthly literary journal called *Antardrishti*. Similarly, other publications like *Kurākānī* (ANFS Souvenir), *Chautārī* (SNSNY Newsletter), *Diyālo* (NCNC magazine) etc. include Nepali essays, poems, and other news and views in both Nepali and English.

### **Cultural Characteristics**

**Economy and Housing:** Because they are still in their first generation, Nepalese immigrants in the US have not established big businesses and industrial entrepreneurship yet. A major portion of early Nepalese immigrants hold white-collar jobs, technical, educational or other professional and semiprofessional positions. They are engineers, doctors, horticulturists, agroeconomists, geologists, geographers, professors-lecturers, lawyers, economists, and other semiprofessional junior technicians. Some established Nepalese individuals are able to run small scale businesses such as consultancy and engineering firms, health clinics, travel agencies, food stores, restaurants, oriental craft imports etc. Approximately, 80% of Nepalese immigrants who arrived prior to the mid 1980s have a comfortable life styles owning apartments, town houses or some time even mansion to live. In some cases, they also own and or have other properties and investments along with a considerable amount of bank balance.

However, unlike the earlier immigrants, the majority of Nepalese who arrived after mid 80s are not well educated or qualified to acquire professional occupations. More than 60% of late immigrants (as opposed to 20% of earlier arrivals) are unskilled workers who earn subsistence salaries. They either rent or own less expensive apartments or town houses. There are no records of homeless Nepalese within the US.

**Religion:** Hinduism and Buddhism are the dominant religions of Nepalese in America. Hinduism is the National religion of Nepal as about 90% of Nepalese are Hindu. In America, about 80% of Nepalese are Hindu Bahun-Chhetris and Newars. Most of the people from Nepalese Tarai also believe on Hinduism. A portion of Newar population and most of the Himalayan origin Tibeto-Mongolian origin Nepalese follow either Buddhism or Tibetan Bon type of shamanism. Of these, Sherpa, Tamang, Thakali, and Gurung people are the followers of Tibetan Buddhism or Bon tradition. Although there are some *theravādins*, majority of Buddhist Newars are the followers of *mahāyāna* Buddhism.

Nepalese Hindus in the US celebrate their religious festivals both collectively in group and separately at individual households. Although Nepalese communities in the US do not have their own Hindu temples, most of these frequently visit Hindu temples founded and run by different Indian communities. Nepalese in Americas under the leadership of Nepalese Cultural Council are planning to establish a cultural center and a Hindu temple somewhere in the Metropolitan Washington D.C. area. They have already raised a couple of hundred thousand dollars fund for this purpose. A Nepali Hindu religious association named Sanatana Dharma Sewa Samiti was established in New York City in 1992 which organizes events for some of the main religious pujas and festivals each year.

**World view:** Like in home, basically there are two different world views prevailed within the Nepalese communities in the US representing their Hindu and Buddhist order. The Hindus believe that universe is the undergoing an eternally repeated cycle of creation, protection, and destruction represented by their three major deities, Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshvara respectively. Hindus' universe comprises of three popular *lokas* (worlds), *svarga*, an immortal world which could be compared with heaven), *martya*, a mortal world (the earth), and *pātāla* or *naraka* which could be compared with hell. They believe that every human being according to his/her *karma* (action) of the mortal life on earth would either get a place in *svarga* or in *naraka* after the death. They also believe in *punarjanma* (rebirth) and *mokṣa* (salvation) from mortal life.

For the Buddhist people in general, this mortal world is the place of suffering but they also believe that such suffering can be transcended through attaining wisdom and good action. They also believe on the theory of karma (action) and countless world system. The Vajrayanists of Nepal believe the *ādibuddha vajradhara* (spiritual Buddha) as an absolute controller of the universe which includes thirteen kinds of worlds popularly known as *trayodasabhuvana*. The Mahayanists believe that every being on the world is

empty or devoid of self nature (*Sunyāta*) which always needs help from the Bodhisattva, a most compassionate or gracious form of Buddha especially to become enlightened to achieve *Bodhisattvahood* or *nirvāna* (emancipation) from the worldly sufferings.

**Marriage, Family, and Kinship:** In most cases, Nepalese immigrants were married in Nepal before their arrival or return to Nepal to get married. There is also a growing tendency among second generation Nepalese males, to return to Nepal to find appropriate partners. Because of this trend, the second generation Nepalese women may have difficulty obtaining a Nepalese husband. Consequently, there is also a growing tendency among young Nepalese women to marry Americans or other internationals. Usually, Nepalese male youths do not want to marry a Nepalese girl raised and educated in an American environment. In some cases, parents of such Nepalese women try to sponsor suitable men to come to the US to marry their daughters.

Nepalese society is bound with strong traditions of class hierarchy which has become a sensitive issue in Nepalese communities in America. Surprisingly, Nepalese are likely to accept international matrimonial relationships rather than an inter-caste marriage within their own Nepalese community. Dozens of Nepalese men have married American and other international women already.

In conclusion, because the Nepalese American community is small by its size, multiethnic in its origin, and still strongly bound by religion, the scenario of marriage practices among the Nepalese of second generation in America may become complex and problematic. Even so, because of these traditional factors the marriage life of Nepalese people is highly successful with a few unhappy incidents and less than 1 % of divorce.

As is common practice among Hindus and Buddhists, generally, a hierarchy based gender and seniority prevails in Nepalese society, the senior male member of a family having authority in family affairs. Family life is very important to the Nepalese and sense of mutual respect and understanding is very strong. Every member of family holds a special place and position with respect and recognition as Hindu and Buddhist family traditions guarantee that.

**Community Institutions, Organizations, Festivals, and Functions:** Nepalese in America are striving to maintain their best for their unity and by establishing Nepalese organizations uncovering the areas related to geographic regions, ethnicity, student affairs, religion, culture and literary development, academic activities, mutual friendships, politics and

development, and human rights etc. This trend was started in the early eighties and is getting popularity in the present decade of 1990s. There is also a Nepalese American Council (NAC) established in 1991 to meet the need of an umbrella organization to bring different Nepalese organizations together for common interests of the Nepalese in Americas. Other representing associations related to Nepal and the Nepalese are: Association of Nepalese in Americas (ANA), Association of Nepalese in Midwest America (ANMA), America-Nepal Society (ANS, DC.), America-Nepal Society of California, America-Nepal Friendship Society (ANFS, NY), Nepal Association of Northern California, Nepalese Association of Southeastern America (NASA), Florida-Nepal Association, Greater Boston Nepali Community, Association of Nepalese in Canada, Nepalese Community Network of Canada, International Nepali Literary Society (INLS, DC.), Nepal Forum at Columbia University, (NY), Society of Nepalese Students in New York (SNSNY), Nepalese Women's Association, (NY), Alliance for Democracy and Human Rights in Nepal (ADHaR, NY), United Sherpa Society, (NY), Nepalese and Friends Association, AZ, Nepā Pāsā Pucha Americaye, DC., Phoolbari Club, DC., Nepal Youth Organization-USA, DC., and Sanatana Dharma Sewa Samiti, NY.

Through these organizations Nepalese in America celebrate their social, cultural, religious, and even Nepali national festivals like *dasain*, *tihar*, *shivaratri*, *teej*, Nepali New Year's day (*naya-varsha*), Newari *bhintuna*, and Sherpa and other Himalaya peoples' *lo-sar* etc. In some places they even celebrate Nepalese Democracy Day (*prajātantra divasa*) as their festival. To share common experience and ideas, they organize occasional conventions, seminars, meetings, talk and cultural programs, community picnics time to time. Through these organizations they also publish different souvenirs, newsletters, literary and other publications as well. The representing Nepalese publications are: *Kurākānī* (Souvenir of ANFS, NY), *Nepal Update*, (D.C.), *Viewpoints* (Newsletter, ANMA, OH), *ADHaR* (Newsletter, Alliance for Democracy, NY), *Sagarmāthā Times*, *Mt. Everest News*, • (Missouri), *Namaste, Yati* (Newsletter, NASA, GA), *Dabu* (Newsletter, NPP), *Samjhana* (Newsletter, ANS, DC.), *Chautārī* (Newsletter, SNSNY, NY), *Samāchār-vichār* (joint publication of GBNC and NFB, Boston), *Diyālo* (Canada), *Lāligurāns* (Newsletter, NAC, Canada), *Antardrīṣṭi Literary* (D.C.) *Kṣhitij* (The Horizon), (Newsletter, Nyo-USA, D.C.). In addition, after the development of computer information superhighway through the internet, Nepalese in America have also become able to exploit this wonderful opportunity by developing their own information home pages and programs like the *Nepal Digest Foundation* and *Socio-culture Nepal* etc.

### **Social and Cultural Assimilation**

Although the Nepalese community is very small, there has been deliberate effort to participate in local and national political decision making process. Particularly the Nepalese Americans think that the changes in their birth place, Nepal will effect only their psyche, but the happening in the US will effect on the very foundation of their existence. But the identity of being a Nepalese seems to remain very strong among Nepalese although they have been attracted by the American culture and life styles. Thus, in reality and in anthropological definition, Nepalese migrants in America can also be defined by 'marginal people' who face a dilemma in their attempt to adopt to the social cultural norms of the host society.

Some researchers have also observed a Nepalese tendency of staying away from real American socio-cultural organizations and activities with a particular intention of preserving their original self identity. In contrary to this, may be because of their pre background of English language and being relatively a small community Nepalese can be observed as being able to mixing up fast especially with English speaking Americans. For example, some Nepalese immigrants have also been honored by the city governments for their active participation in the field of social work in the metropolitan cities like Boston.

Despite their parents' guidelines and tough instruction most of the Nepalese youths born and raised in the US are not so serious towards Nepalese ethnicity, language, religion, and culture. Therefore, this particular tendency of Nepalese youths is going to be a big challenge against the concept of preserving Nepalese distinct identity.

Inter-ethnic integration among the Nepalese seems more effective here in America than in Nepal. Different socio-cultural associations of Nepalese immigrants have served an important role for this. However some ethnic organizations are indirectly developing contrary situation to this broad ethnic assimilation process.

Because Nepalese Americans are few in number and scattered in residence, there have been only a few acts of violence against them. But in the 1990s anti-Asian and anti-South Asian feelings have surfaced particularly in many large cities. There has been a significant increase in hate crime against South Asians especially against Indians, Pakistanis and sometime even against Nepalese. There is also a deep feeling of discrimination among both the Nepalese educated elites and unskilled workers on the job and on the process of finding job. Nepalese immigrants have experienced taboos at work particularly from American co-workers, supervisors, or sometime from other senior employees. Main cause of such



'discrimination' according to the Nepalese respondents are: cultural, racial difference and bias feeling emerged from such differences.

### Calendar

**Nayā Varsha Holiday;** Nepalese New Year's day (1st day of the month of *Vaishākha* of *Vikrama era*, usually in the middle of April). America-Nepal Friendship Society of New York City celebrates this festival with a colorful program inviting every member of Nepalese community in and around New York City.

**Bhānu Jayanti:** Adikavi (pioneer poet of Nepali literature) Bhanubhakta Acharya's birth anniversary (29th day of the month of *Ashadha* of *Vikrama era*, in the middle of July). Some Nepalese community associations celebrate *Bhānu Jayanti* with various literary programs and speeches in the following weekend of his exact birth day if it is not in the weekend by regular calendar.

**Teej or Haritālīka:** A socio-religious festival especially of women. *Shravana shukla tritiya* (3rd day of light fortnight of the month of *Shravana* of traditional lunar calendar, usually in July or August. Nepalese women visit Hindu temples this day to worship gods and goddesses especially lord Shiva and remain fasting wishing for long life and good health of their husbands.

**Kriṣṇāṣṭamī:** A religious holiday, *vrata* and *pujā* in memory of birth anniversary of lord Kriṣṇa. *Bhādra kṛiṣṇa aṣṭhamī* (8th day of dark fortnight of the month of *Bhadra* of traditional lunar calendar, usually in August).

**Dashain:** The main socio-religious and national festival of Nepal and the Nepalese community in the US. *Āshvina shukla saptamī* to *Āshvina shukla chaturdashī* (7th to 14th day of light fortnight of the month of *Ashvina* of traditional lunar calendar, usually in September). Nepalese people in Nepal and in the US celebrate this week-long festival in memory of divine victory over evil spirits, demons with the help of female power, *mātrishakti Durgā Bhavānī Kālī*.

**Tihar or Dīpāvalī:** The second biggest socio-religious festival. *Kārtika kṛiṣṇa chaturdashī* to *Kārtika-shukla parevā* (14th day of dark fortnight to 1st day of light fortnight of the month of *Kartika* of traditional lunar calendar, usually in October but sometime it goes to November). In Nepal,

this is a festival of brothers and sisters, worship of goddess of wealth (*Laxmi*), cow, bullock, dog, and crow popularly, known as *Bhaitika*, *Laxmipuja*, *Gaitihār*, *Gorutihār* or *Govardhanapūja*, *Kukuratihār* and *Kagtihār* respectively. But, Nepalese in the US. celebrate only *Bhāitika* and *Laxmīpūja*.

**Bhintuna:** Newar community's New Year's day festival. *Kārtika Kṛishṇa aumshī* (15th day of dark fortnight or no moon day of the month of *Kārtika* of traditional lunar calendar, usually in October) but sometime in November). *Mhapūjā* or self soul worship is the main part of this festival. *Nepā: Pāsā Puchā*, a Washington D.C. based Newari community association plays an important role in organizing special programs in this festival.

**Nepalese King's birthday:** Nepalese present King Birendra's birthday. 14th day of the month of *Pausha* of *Vikrama* era, in December. Nepalese living in and around big cities like- New York, Washington D.C. etc. celebrate this occasion as a symbol of Nepalese unity day together with Nepalese Mission to the United Nations in New York City, Nepalese Embassy to the US in Washington D.C, and Nepalese Connections of other cities.

**Shreepañchamī:** *Sarasvatipuja* (worship of goddess of learning) *Māgha shukla pañchamī* (5th day of light fortnight of the month of *Magha* of traditional lunar calendar, usually in January). This festival is popular mainly among young students.

**Prajantradiyasa:** Nepalese democracy day. 14th day of the month of *Phālguna* of *Vikrama* era, in the middle of February. Nepalese community in the US celebrate this festival organizing formal meetings in memory of Nepalese peoples' victory over the Panchayat and Rana autocratic regimes in Nepal.

**Lo-sar:** Sherpa and other Himalayan origin peoples' New Year's festival. Nepalese Sherpa community in the US celebrate this festival usually in February. Originally this is a New Year's festival of Tibet and the Tibetan people. The *United Sherpa Society* of New York City is the leading Nepalese community association in celebrating this festival with a colorful cultural program and a dinner party.

**Mahashivaratri:** It is said that this is a religious festival celebrated in memory of the day of lord Shiva's marriage with goddess Pārvatī. *Phālguna krishṇa trayodashī* (13th day of dark fortnight of the month of *Phālguna* of traditional lunar calendar, usually in February. Alike Nepalese people at home, Nepalese in the US. assemble at lord Shiva's temples and worship the god. After special prayers and worship they enjoy eating *prasāda*, varieties of food offered to the deity.

#### Note

Summary of this article with a list of calendar of events has been published under entry no. 115 *Nepalese* in the *Encyclopedia of American Immigrant Cultures: Builders of a Nation*, New York: Macmillan Library Reference, 1997 pp. 645-652

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## RESEARCH NOTE

### THE FLUIDITY OF ETHNICITY: THE CASE OF NEPALI AND NEWAR IDENTITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Bina Gubhaju

#### Introduction

I have been searching for the true meaning of exactly what it means to be a Newar. Who is a true Newar? Just with a last name alone can we justify our claim to be a Newar? It is just me who is searching for the true meaning of Newarism? Or is it just a mid-life crisis I am going through? Well, I have to confess that I don't know too much about our Newa culture or heritage. I was born in a Maharjan family, but my parents did not speak Newari that much. ... Actually I learned more Newar words and things about Newar culture after I came to America .... I don't even know who the most famous Newar poets, artists and writers are. I know that Newars are supposed to be the most educated group in Kathmandu, but why is our culture losing value, traditions and ideals? As we look around, many nationalities and groups have their own cultural traditions. They promote their country, language, culture and tradition, but Newar people are lagging in this area. Well, our generation did not have the opportunity to learn the Newari language, because when we were in school it was not required. Many of us can hardly read and write. Many of our traditions have been through special gatherings. If we want to make it ever lasting in this culture, we need to have practical experience rather than just being a mere observer. (Maharjan, [jinewa.html](#))

The above quote was taken from an article entitled "*Ji Newa? Am I Newar?*" written by Dr. Tulsi Maharjan. Maharjan is the president of *Nepa Pāsā Pucha*, a Newar based cultural organization founded in order to preserve and promote the Newar culture in the United States. Maharjan represents a confused Nepali-American who is struggling to maintain his identity as a Newar in the United States. The piece from the article brings to the surface some of the major issues that are relevant to the following paper. The confusion that he has encountered coming to the United States supports the notion of a shifting character of ethnicity. It shows that the boundaries of an ethnic group may vary depending on the individual, the situation, and context. Maharjan is rethinking the boundaries of his ethnic identity as a

Newar after coming to the United States. He has developed a greater awareness of his ethnicity in a place outside of Nepal. Ethnicity is an ambiguous concept that is culturally constructed. It may involve language, religion, caste, nationality and other elements of identity. Also, the relative importance of the factors constituting ethnicity may shift within different contexts. Maharjan, in his piece, has defined Newar ethnicity in terms of language, culture, tradition, literature, art. All of the above categories, he claims, are important in determining Newar identity and ethnicity. He is questioning whether his ethnic identity can be determined by his last name alone or whether there is something more to it. Certainly, coming to the United States has sharpened his perception of ethnicity and made him think of other ways of defining his ethnicity, that is different from his homeland. This change in his perception of ethnicity suggests a dynamic nature of the term.

The concept of ethnicity changed depending on the situation and context as it is the people in the society who define the boundaries of ethnicity. In a situation such as that of immigrants, they are attempting to create an ethnicity for themselves in a place away from their homeland. The people themselves create this new sense of identity by talking about these notions and setting boundaries for themselves, just as Maharjan has done for himself in the article that he has written. Maharjan's identification of the various categories, such as language, religion, nationality, tradition, in determining Newar ethnicity also shows that ethnicity is a very broad category inclusive of many different characteristics. Once again these characteristics may change depending on the context. Especially in an immigrant situation, the boundaries of ethnicity broaden. Nationality, a very large category, becomes an important aspect of identification. Nationality, which is not an appropriate definition of ethnicity in the homeland, since everybody is of the same nationality, is pronounced in a foreign country. In a place away from one's homeland, one is defined by one's nationality.

In the following paper, I will be looking at the change of ethnicity as it pertains to the Nepali immigrant population in the United States. As will be evident, since the Nepali population here find themselves in a setting wherein they are only one of the many minority groups, the definitions of caste and ethnicity are very different in the United States than in their homeland. As a result, the ethnic and caste differences that are so distinct in Nepal start to disappear in this new environment. A new ethnic group "Nepali" emerges, overwhelming previously important ethnic group or caste identities. However, the case of the Newars in the United States presents an interesting contradiction because their identity rather than merging into the larger Nepali population becomes more salient in this particular context.

### **Profile of the Nepali Immigrants**

The Nepali immigrant population of the United States is very small compared to that of other Asian and South Asian countries. The Nepalese comprise about .05 percent of the total Asian population and about 0.4 of one percent of the total South Asian immigrant population. Nepal has yet to be categorized as a separate nation in the year book of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service. It is usually lumped together with India (Dhungel 1997: 4). When beginning this research I had a very difficult time finding information on the Nepali immigrant population. Ramesh Dhungel who is writing a thesis on Nepali immigrants states, "The Library's documentation center at the Bureau of the Census of the US Government does not have the most current statistics on Nepalese immigrants as the numbers are insignificant in comparison to the immigrants of other countries (4)."

The total number of Nepalese residing in the United States is estimated to be around 18000. However, only 3000 of them are either permanent residents or naturalized citizens. The remaining Nepalese are only temporary residents who are here either for higher education or for better job opportunities. Almost all of them originally plan on returning to Nepal after retirement. The immigrant population is comprised of various caste and ethnic groups as traditionally defined in the homeland. Numerically, the dominant caste present is of the Bahun-Chettri caste of the Parbatiya ethnic group, since the majority of the people who come to the United States are of this high caste status. They come to the United States as highly educated and technically trained people. The low caste, typically the less educated people, are not able to apply for visas nor are they able to meet the expenses for departure. Thus, the Bahun-Chettri are the largest single group, constituting about forty-five percent of the total Nepali immigrant population. Following that, the second largest group are the Newars who constitute about forty percent. There are a far greater number of Hindu Newars than Buddhist Newars although the percent breakdown is not available. However, it is known that eighty percent of the Nepalese in the United States are Hindu. The people from the Himalayan region constitute about ten percent and the terai region constitute five percent of the total population. In comparison, the Kathmandu region of Nepal consists of forty-four percent Newars, eighteen percent Chettris and fifteen percent Bahuns, and the remaining twenty-two percent include the other ethnic minorities. The numbers are different when considering the population of Nepal as a whole. In Nepal, the Newars are a minority constituting only 5 percent of the population (Dhungel 1997: 4-7).

The Nepalese interviewed for the study were mainly from the New York area and, to a lesser extent, from Boston. When the interview was first conducted the majority were of the bahun caste, followed by a few high caste Hindu Newars. I made a deliberate attempt to interview a few more Buddhist Newars. I was not able to include people of other ethnic groups as they were so few in number and could not easily be found. Among the nine people that were interviewed, four were Hindu Brahmins, four were Buddhist Newars and one was a Hindu Newar. All of the informants are married and are economically well-off. The age of the informants range from the thirties to the sixties. The majority of the informants have been in the United States for over twenty years, except in a few cases where they have only been here for six to eight years. It is often the case that these people initially come to the United States to take advantage of the better education system offered here. Their original intention was to return to their homeland after completing their education. However, in almost all of the cases, after the completion of their education a job opportunity was granted. Realizing that economic conditions are better in the United States than in Nepal, a decision was made to stay several more years. The male informants were either already married or had returned to Nepal to find a suitable marriage partner. The female informants were here because of their husbands (with one exception). Many of the informants are still unsure of what the future holds for them. They all express a desire to return to their country but considering Nepal's living conditions and that their own children have adopted the American lifestyle, they are tempted to remain in the States. Several of the informants have plans to divide their time between the two countries after their retirement.

### **Issues of Caste and Ethnicity**

The complexity of the caste system and ethnic divisions of Nepal was once again clearly evident during the interviews. Discourse on the issues of caste and ethnicity supports the notion that people have contradictions and confusion regarding this subject. From the interviews it becomes evident that one of the advantages of qualitative ethnographic research over quantitative methods is the use of such discourse analysis. It reveals something that surveys are never able to produce. On the surface, specific answers to questions show that caste and ethnic identities are not much of a problem among the Nepali community in the United States. When people are asked whether they feel any discrimination based on their caste and ethnicity, their responses do not include much tension or animosity. However, further discourse analysis of the interviews gives evidence that issues of caste and ethnic identity are as much an issue here as in Nepal,

whether casually or consciously. The way that people talk about this issue becomes an important way of knowing how they feel about the subject. In a situation such as this, among the Nepali immigrants, whose circumstances have changed, the meaning of these terms have become more problematic. Therefore, the way people talk about the terms becomes even more important. It becomes a way to understand how the people are struggling to express their changing new sense of identity and a way for them to construct their identity. By talking about it and expressing their views, they are also creating a world for themselves and other people.

Almost all of the interviews were conducted in English, except in a few cases. However, terms such as "ethnic group" and "caste" were always used in the English language. When the informants were asked for their ethnic group and caste, most of them seemed confused, and gave me varying answers. The way that caste and ethnicity were defined by the respondents was not clear. First of all, they used the terms caste and ethnicity interchangeably. Some respondents identified their caste when asked for ethnicity. This was a common response given by the interviewees in Nepal as well. This uncertainty further illustrates the complexity of the meaning of these terms to the people. It also could be an indication that "ethnicity" may not be the most meaningful term for Nepalese in discussing their identity. In addition, religious affiliation became an important identifying marker for one's caste or ethnicity in the States. Whereas in Nepal, informants did not make use of religion to specify caste or ethnicity. One of my informants used the Nepali categorization of Newars belonging to the Vaishya caste. Some of my informants also perceived ethnicity through American categories. For example one respondent identified himself as belonging to the ethnic group "South Asian". This can be seen as an influence of western classification. In the United States, the Nepalese are categorized from the outside as under the very broad rubric, "South Asian." South Asian immigrants define themselves as a group because they are from the nation-states of South Asia.

Partially as a result of this classification and because of certain shared, general cultural characteristics, South Asians, especially the Indian community, seem for Nepalese much more culturally similar than they would in Nepal. The differences that may have been significant in Nepal seem like similarities in a foreign land. For example, meeting someone from India in the United States makes one feel closer to home and the Indian is classified in the 'us' category whereas in Nepal, the Indian is probably categorized in the 'other' category. In the United States, India seems to be the culture most similar to the Nepali culture. One of my informants (Sita) mentions, "It definitely helps to have a big Indian community because



whenever I have to go shopping for masala (spices) I go the Indian shops. If there are any functions or rituals that need to be performed then we get the priests from the Indian temples." Another interviewee (Hari) says, "They give us a sense of not being far away from home."

Two other informants express their view on the Indian community:

The Indian community is pretty big .... Say for example the Indian market, we can buy so many things we need. If it wasn't for the Indians we will not have those places, places such as Jackson heights, Edison market or Jersey city where we buy several ethnic food or spices or costumes. When we see them because of our cultural similarities and feelings we can get a lot of feedback from them and at times I have found they are quite helpful (Name).

If I meet someone from India right away there is a bond, some kind of a bond I cannot explain it. It's almost like we are from the same country, same place but we are not. I guess it is because our thinking is alike and our culture is similar. I go to Hindu temples sometimes and I often buy spices and various foods I need in the Indian markets because that is the closest I can get to Nepal (Sabitri).

It is clear from their responses that the Nepalese rely on the large and established Indian community, which the Nepalese have not been able to form yet. Also, Savitri mentions that seeing someone from India is almost like seeing someone from Nepal. Therefore, the Indian culture is much more alike in the United States than it would be in Nepal.

Further discourse on identity also showed that "Nepal" was one of the categories used by some to identify their ethnic group. It seems as if coming to the United States has sharpened their conception or notions of ethnicity. Essentially, they have created a new sense of identity after coming to another country. They begin to use the term in a much more inclusive sense. Identity is created in terms of opposition. In Nepal the ethnic group "Newar" was created as a result of an opposition to the dominant group - the Bahun and Chettri. Here, in the case of the Nepali immigrants, there is a change of national context which changes the opposition. The Nepali immigrants are part of a larger category of South Asians. In accordance with the American discourse and category of ethnicity many identify as 'South Asian' or 'Nepali' and use religion as a critical element of identity. These

categories become relevant in the United States, whereas in Nepal there was no such need.

### **The Disappearance of Caste and Ethnic Divisions**

Most of the interviewees agreed that the caste divisions that exist in Nepal do not exist in the United States. In the United States, they are an ethnic community in and of themselves. They are already a small minority, therefore it would be impossible to separate them into further divisions. There seems to be more of an inter-ethnic integration among the Nepalese in the United States than in Nepal. The different sociocultural associations of the Nepali immigrants have enabled this integration. Organizations such as Association of Nepalese in America, America-Nepal Friendship society, Greater Boston Nepali Community, Nepal Forum at Columbia University, Alliance for Democracy and Human Right in Nepal, Nepalese Women's Association have coordinated various activities throughout the years bringing together the Nepalese community ([organiz.html](#)). In addition to these, there are various other organizations. I have listed only the ones of the New York area. All of these organizations are equally inclusive. The only two ethnically based organizations are the United Sherpa society and the *Nepa Pasa Pucha Amerikaye* (Newar based). Through these organizations the Nepalese in America celebrate their social, cultural, and religious festivals. These organizations also publish various newsletters and other publications throughout the year. The differences among caste and ethnic groups that were so prominent in Nepal become similarities in a foreign country. Members of various ethnic groups in Nepal have very little in common with one another, culturally and linguistically. The following quote from an informant mentions this new sense of ethnic identity:

The way that we live here is mostly we belong to our ethnic community and all my friends who are here. With them what happens is the actual daily living we live in our family and we share with the people here and at work, so in respect it does not really matter to me but I still see a very big difference about how we live back in Nepal and how we live out here and it's a different world (Rama).

There is some kind of tension and animosity between different groups in Nepal. I think it is less here than what you see in Nepal. The reason may be in Nepal there are a sizable number of people so they can do well on their own but here the Nepalese are a very small minority and again if you start

having these ethnic divisions....you are so small in number and you feel very vulnerable. There is more of a sense of community here, even though once in a while you hear people of certain ethnic groups saying things and there is a segregation in their social life. I don't think it is a major problem here (Krishna).

That (caste) applies much less than it does in Nepal. Here, we as Nepalese come together whereas in Nepal we kind of separate within our own groups. Here, we are much more together. A lot of Nepalese marry one another here. The sense of nearness is here because we live in a foreign land I guess (Hari).

Both Rama and Krishna have used the term "ethnic community" to refer to the Nepali population. They have categorized all Nepalese as a single ethnic group, despite their geographical, linguistic, and ethnic diversity. Language seems to be the unifying force for the group. All of the Nepalese who come to the United States are able to speak Nepali. Their common language unites the people together, as well as sharing a similar background such as their Nepali nationality and culture. Michael Hutt (1997) writes, "The Nepali language is the basis of Nepali ethnic identity outside Nepal; it is the primary basis for self-identification with the Diaspora community (116)." The Newars who have their own language, often speak in their own language whenever they are in the presence of other Newars. They use their unique language as an important marker of solidarity. Other ethnic languages such as Sherpa, Gurung, Tamang are also used by members of those groups. However, many of the ethnic languages, such as Newari, seem to be slowly disappearing in the United States. It is possible that even Nepali fluency will disappear by the next generation due to the smallness of the Nepali community. Most of the second generation Nepalese Americans do not know how to speak Nepali. The possibility of losing Nepali language also depends on the arrival of new immigrants. Rama, Krishna and Hari's responses also suggest that it is not simply being able to speak Nepali that unites them, but also being citizens of Nepal. Nationality becomes an important aspect of ethnicity in an immigrant situation because that is how they are defined in this context.

Although most of the informants that were interviewed responded that there were no caste or ethnic divisions, there seems to be a heightened sense of ethnic awareness among the Newars and other minority ethnic groups of Nepal. Evidence of this can be seen in the few ethnically based

organizations that exist. All of them are formed by people who are of a minority within the Nepali American population. Their minority status in Nepal seems to have brought about this feeling since their identity was already suppressed in Nepal. Thus, coming to the United States gives them the need to assert their identity.

One Buddhist Newar who was interviewed also pointed out that there were indeed caste differences, although subtle, in which the Newars have been subjugated by the Bahun-Chettri group.

Although they try to calm down about their ethnic background. But I am definitely sure that the Bahun and Chettri group are feeling that they are superior to other people. They do have that type of a feeling although they don't open their mouth. But we can feel it. Just by the way they talk, the way they behave, the way they act. It is very imperative because most of the people who come here although they call it Nepali people but whoever comes here, the majority of them are Bahun and Chettri. They have a connection with the high ranking people and that's why they come. While as you can take the Chame, pore, gaine, damai, kasai, those people have never been able to come here and I don't see any single person who are a low caste people. If there were an equal opportunity given by the Bahun-Chettri, then why don't they come here. They are really subduing the other caste. They do not want everybody to become one (Gopal).

It is always the case that the people on the bottom are the ones that feel any type of discrimination since they are the ones who experience the difference. The caste and ethnic distinctions that are present in the United States are taken to be not outward discrimination but rather hidden feelings. The strong traditions of class hierarchy that are common in their homeland has become a very sensitive issue in the Nepali community of the United States. As mentioned previously, the majority of the people who come to the United States are of a high caste status, therefore, interaction among the people are only going to be on the same caste level and social status. One of my informants revealed a case in which she had brought a housekeeper (low caste) from Nepal and would take her along to most Nepali social gatherings. People began to criticize her for such behavior as inappropriate mixing of castes. She began to realize that although people try to show that there is any discrimination, it is inherent in most people.

Also, one can see the prevalence of caste ideas in choosing marriage partners. Caste still seems to be an important criterion in finding suitable spouses even in the United States. Most people when interviewed said that it was suitable as long as the other person was a Nepali but they would most certainly prefer someone from their own caste and ethnic background.

Here is one of my informants talking about her possible marriage partner,

I took an interest in him and I told my mom that I had been talking to a guy, he's from New York and he is a Nepali, he's a brahmin, same caste and she was very happy to know that .... It was important that I marry someone from my own caste in a sense that I wanted my mom to be happy and I knew even though she was telling me that she doesn't really care I knew that she would be happy if I got married to somebody from Nepal (Sita).

Although the second generation Nepalese don't really have a preference on this matter, it is usually the parents' preference that they find someone suitable. It is difficult to deduce whether Nepalese are more likely to accept international relationships or inter-caste marriage. It seems to be the trend that there are more international marriages than inter-caste. But most of my informants said that they would prefer that their children marry someone from Nepal regardless of ethnic background. Once again, nationality becomes an important aspect of identifying ethnicity. Many immigrants prefer that their children marry other "citizens of Nepal."

### **The Newars of the United States**

Among the Newars, there seems to be a heightened sense of ethnic awareness. Previously I had argued that caste and ethnic differences among the Nepalese in the United States had disappeared. However, the case of the Newars is paradoxical because their ethnicity, rather than disappearing, has become more pronounced in this particular context. The unusual circumstances of the Newars in their homeland, may be the cause of such a phenomenon. The Newars who were once the ruling class of Nepal have now become a minority group. It is unfortunate that many of the Newars in Nepal itself do not know much about their own tradition. They have begun to realize that they need to learn about their own culture first.

The Newars, already a subordinate minority in their country, upon coming to the United States may have been influenced by the ethnic assertions of other minority groups in the United States. Since a Newar in

the United States, will always be considered a "Nepali", it seems that they are attempting to create an identity for themselves that distinguishes themselves from the dominant group.

In Washington D.C. there is in fact a Newar based organization called the *Nepa Pasa Pucha* which is an ethnically based organization that is directed towards the Newar community. It was established as an increasing population of the Newars in the United States felt the need to preserve their cultural heritage outside of Nepal. The fact that the Newars are struggling to maintain their identity in Nepal gives rise to the need for this particular group to assert their individuality.

The same organization publishes a monthly Newar magazine called the *DABUU*. The goals of the association as stated in the publication are:

1. Conserve the cultural heritage, the traditions and the customs of Nepal.
2. Participate and develop the Newar culture in arts, literature, music, dances, custom and rituals of the people in the modern world.
3. Enhance mutual understanding between the people of Newar culture and other cultures.
4. Appreciate and respect the uniqueness of each culture. (Shakya, bhintuna.html)

Also in this magazine and on various Internet sites many Newars, have written concerning their ethnic identity. Articles such as 'What does being a Newar mean to me?', "Am I a Newar", "Nostalgia", an editorial on "cultural pride" questioning their Newar identity have appeared in the magazine. Beena Maharjan in her article writes, "June 23, 1994 - the date I entered the United States. Ever since then I have been thrilled by the idea of meeting people from Nepal. I cross examine myself - 'ANYBODY from Nepal?' My desperate answer would be 'yes'. Nevertheless, deep in my heart, I am aware of my preference for Newars (beena.html)." Tulsi Maharjan has written many articles over his concern of losing his Newar cultural identity. Referring back to my introductory quote it is obvious that his sense of ethnic awareness developed after living in the United States. He mentions that his desire to learn about the Newar culture actually started once he came to the United States. He writes, "Actually, I learned more Newari words and things about Newar culture after I came to America. Although, I did manage to take one course in Newari while I was in high school in Patan but that was not an easy task because all my friends were non Newars." Coming to the United States where there is much talk about race and ethnicity has made

him aware of his own ethnic roots and given him the inspiration to teach the culture to other people.

In most of the articles that Tulsi Maharjan has written, he criticizes the situation of the Newars in Nepal and the lack of cultural interest of the Newars there for the disappearance of Newar culture. He writes that many of the Newars of Kathmandu are probably more westernized than the Newars, in the States.

On that matter, he writes,

We are rapidly diluting our history. First of all we did not have that strong of a tradition to start with. Our culture has been watered-down for many years by outside influences..... As we yearn for good old *Wola Baji* (ethnic Newar food) our friends in Nepal are eating *chow chow* (instant noodles). As we become more easterner, our friends in Nepal have become more westerner (Maharjan 1997: 1).

Two things seem to be going on here. First, coming to the United States and being away from one's culture has induced feelings of nostalgia in Maharjan. This seems to be a common outcome among people living away from their homeland. The mere feeling of being away from one's own culture creates a greater appreciation of that particular culture in the individual. In the case of Maharjan, it may have been the influence of other minority groups' attempt of asserting their identity in the United States, that has made him feel the need to promote 'his' culture. In another article entitled, "Let's Empower one another", Maharjan writes, "'One's cultural heritage, language, and tradition. They are very important especially when one is far away from their homeland (3). Thus, is the case in which the Newar ethnicity has become more pronounced in the United States.

## Conclusion

The shifting importance of ethnicity seen in the case of the Newars supports the notion that ethnicity, rather than being something static, is a process that is in continual flux. The boundaries and definition of ethnicity are never clear-cut. Ethnicity, however it may be understood as "primordial," is in fact a concept constructed by the people of a given society. This paper has argued that ethnicity can be defined from various perspectives: in terms of language, religion, nationality. In a context, such as that of an immigrant community, their ethnicity is defined through their nationality as "Nepalese," whereas in Nepal, they would be defined through their own caste and ethnic distinctions. "Nepali" becomes an umbrella term to identify

the various caste and ethnic groups that are present in the United States. However, the Newars in the United States are attempting to create an identity for themselves apart from the larger Nepalese immigrant community. This shows that the concept of ethnicity is relative depending on the situation. Ethnicity may be heightened in one context whereas it may not be as important in another situation. In addition, the question of who belongs to one's ethnic group may expand or contract depending on the context.

In conclusion, I would like to point out some of the limitations that were present in the study and look at ways in which it could have been improved. I would also like to suggest possibilities of further research on this subject. There were many limitations under which this study was conducted. First of all, the sample size for the fieldwork studies in the New York area, was rather small due to time constraints and difficulty of finding relevant informants. In order to make accurate judgments and conclusions a larger sample would have been helpful. I was only able to interview high caste Newars and Parbatiyas predominantly of the Bahun caste. I was not able to locate people of other ethnic groups. It would have been interesting to examine how their views differed from the Newars and the Parbatiyas.

As a result of this thesis, I have learned a whole lot about my own cultural heritage. It is my hope that the Nepali culture, especially the Newar culture will continue the preservation of its heritage. It is reassuring to know that there are people like Tulsi Mahajan who are adamant about preserving the Newari culture in the United States. However, it is difficult to determine how much of this will be continued by the next generation. Considering that most of the second generation do not even know how to speak Nepali, much less Newari, the hopes for the future do not look very optimistic. Maybe a new influx of Nepali immigrants will change the situation. With the introduction of the lottery system in obtaining visas, a wider variety of Nepalese will be able to come to the United States. Although, most of them will have to be economically well off to afford to come all the way here, it still might bring in several other ethnic and caste groupings. With the wider variety of Nepalese from other ethnic and caste groups it would be interesting to see if there still remains an integration of all the 'Nepalese', even with some members of a lower caste. Presently, almost all of the Nepalese are of the high caste and majority of them are Newars and Bahuns. It is yet to be determined what type of shift of ethnicity the future holds for the Newars in Nepal and the Nepalese immigrants of the United States.



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## List of Interviews (All the names have been changed for confidentiality)

*Informants from the United States* (Interviews conducted in January 1997):

### 1. Rama

Thirty-six year old Hindu Brahmin, he is an attorney-at-law and has lived in the United States for 8½ years. Originally, he came to the United States to pursue his masters at Columbia University. After he got his license, he decided to work here for a couple of years but ended up staying here much longer. Married a Nepali (same ethnic and caste group) studying in Canada, now he has one daughter, plans on returning to Nepal in about seven more years.

### 2. Krishna

Forty-four year old Hindu Brahmin, he is a physician and has lived in the United States for 20 years. He came to the United States with a permanent visa in order to get his post-graduate degree in medicine. He returned to Nepal to get married and brought his wife over. Now he has two children (8-year old son and 13-year old daughter). He has not made

a decision as to where he is going to spend his retired life. He is thinking of dividing his time between Nepal and the United States.

**3. Hari**

Thirty-year old Hindu Brahmin, a Computer Network engineer at the United Nations. He has lived in United States for 16 years. He came here with his parents when he was fourteen. His parents went back to Nepal when he was in college. He decided to stay here and finish his education. Eventually he found a job here and decided that he would spend a few more years and he is uncertain about how much longer he will continue to remain here. He also returned to Nepal to get married. He has a eighteen-month old daughter in Nepal with his parents. His wife is currently finishing her studies in the United States.

**4. Sita**

Thirty-four years old Hindu Brahmin, and the wife of Ram, she has lived in the United States for six years, and previously she had been in Canada for seven years. She moved to the United States after marrying Ram. Now she is a food scientist at Concord Marketing. She plans on returning to Nepal for good after her daughter goes to college.

**5. Gopal**

Forty-one year old middle-class Buddhist Newar, he has lived in the United States for sixteen years. Originally he came to pursue his education and then remained here after he found a job. He also went back to Nepal about four years ago to get married.

**6. Savitri**

Fifty-three years old middle-class Buddhist Newar. She has lived in the United States for twenty-seven years. She came with her husband who came here to do his post graduate studies. She, herself, completed her post graduate studies here and is currently working as a physician. She has a twenty-five years old son. Her future plans are to remain in the United States, occasionally spending three to four months in Nepal.

## RESEARCH NOTE

### SELECTING THE MOST APPROPRIATE MEANS OF CONSERVING THE 55-WINDOW PALACE

Yogesh Raj, Hrday K. Hada  
and Rajan Vaidya

#### Background

The 55-window palace is the principal monument at Bhaktapur Durbar Monument Conservation Zone, one of the five Monument Zones in the Kathmandu Valley, a World Heritage Site. This U-shaped, 3-storey building is believed to be built by King Bhupatindra Malla (N.S.826-842). The name '55-window palace' is, however of recent origin, given by the western visitors of 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Nepal.

This palace suffered a huge damage during the Great Earthquake of 1934 A.D. Almost whole of the second floor along with the 55-window assembly had turned into a heap of rubble. An emergency reconstruction that followed after the earthquake took no regard to the original size and shape of the palace. Those involved in reconstruction at that time did not even bother to realign the tilted southern wall back to the plumb line and certainly changed the positions of the 55-window assembly. Subsequent 'conservation' measures taken during the last fifty years, in the form of removals, additions and replacements caused more damage to the building than conservation. Those were quick and piece-meal recipes prescribed for the immediate problem at sight. The building had also to bear unsuitable occupancies and the vibration caused by the traffic in the vicinity. The earthquake in 1989 might have caused further deterioration in the stability and strength of the palace.

When in 1993, the first conservation proposal was drawn and submitted to the Department of Archeology, the debate over the proposed use of non-traditional construction materials such as pre-stressed concrete slabs ensued. Since then, at least three more conservation proposals have been put forward. By 1997, the debate has already shifted from the suitability of certain construction materials to the conservation policy guidelines in

general. The issues are now the degree of permissible intervention, the prioritizing of preventive, corrective and consolidating measures, safety of the wall painting murals in the first floor and use of the indigenous resources. A national seminar on resolving these policy issues is scheduled on March 11-12, 2000 in Bhaktapur.

### **Introduction**

The scope of this paper is limited. Realizing that the crux of the debate over the conservation of the 55-window palace in Bhaktapur is that of selecting an appropriate technology and its implementation procedure, this paper attempts to set the most appropriate means for any cultural heritage conservation.

Part One of the paper lists several of the criteria for selecting the most appropriate conservation technology. When applied to a few known proposals concerning 55-window palace conservation, these criteria may indicate the direction in which to moderate some of the existing shortcomings in the proposals.

Part Two of the paper gives the most appropriate conservation implementation scheme. The emphasis on implementation procedures needs not to be overstated. The context is again the 55-window palace, but the scheme may always be generalized to cover the whole of the Newar cultural heritage.

### **Part One**

After going through the various related Acts of the HMG/N, Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention of UNESCO, guidelines set up by Department of Archeology (DOA), the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, The Charter of Venice, current practices followed by the various municipalities/VDCs/Guthi Office etc., the criteria for selecting the most appropriate technology in cultural heritage conservation are found to be

### **ADEQUACY REVERSIBILITY SUSTAINIBILITY**

#### **Criteria 1 ADEQUACY**

Is a given (or suggested) technology adequate in fulfilling the conservation requirements/ needs of the concerned people?

a. Principle of the Minimum Intervention

Does it protect the historical authenticity<sup>1</sup> of the heritage?

Does it prevent the heritage against further deterioration<sup>2</sup>?

Does it justify its choice rationally<sup>3</sup>?

b. Principle of Contextualization<sup>4</sup>

Does it preserve the context?

Does it address the post-conservation contextualization?

Is it more than visual conservation<sup>5</sup>?

c. Principle of the Conservation of the Capacity

Is it a local/indigenous/traditional<sup>6</sup> technology?

Does it involve local resources?

Does it incorporate the local conservation practices?

Criteria 2 REVERSIBILITY

a. Is a given (or suggested) technology reversible<sup>7</sup>?

b. If it is not, does it present the extent and consequence of the irreversibility?

Criteria 3 SUSTAINIBILITY

a. Is it compatible with the existing (or reconstructed<sup>8</sup>) technical know-how of the people?

b. If it is not, is it easy to adopt?

c. Does it include post-intervention strategy<sup>9</sup> of conservation?

Applying the above mentioned criteria to a few competing technical (technological policy) proposals concerning the 55-window palace<sup>10</sup>, we see that

1. The debate over the suitable conservation technology has up to now been fruitful,
2. The proposals put forward by the Nepalese experts are more appropriate<sup>11</sup> and
3. The issues of contextualization, local conservation practices and post intervention strategy have not been addressed adequately so far.(Table 1)

## **Part Two**

Adopting the most appropriate implementation scheme (Chart 1) for a cultural heritage conservation work may approach the issues that remained unapprised so far. The characteristic features of this scheme are

### **BOTTOM-UP<sup>12</sup> LOCAL<sup>13</sup> TRANSPARENT<sup>14</sup> ACCOUNTABLE**

The various components in the implementation scheme shall have the following constitution and responsibilities:

#### **APEX BODY for conservation**

- There shall be one APEX BODY for each culturally homogenous area.
- It may consist of *nāyo*, *nvaku* s from every traditional cultural/ritual groups, as well as representatives from a number of related organizations.
- It shall prioritize conservation works after establishing priority guidelines.
- It shall manage conservation fund after preparing funding guidelines.
- It shall have a capacity building unit.
- It shall be supported by a group of professionals.

#### **PROFESSIONAL Group**

- It shall consist of a conservationist, cultural historians, technologists (structural, architectural and material science experts) and a finance controller.
- It shall prepare detailed policy, technical and financial proposals to be negotiated with DOA, UNESCO and other institutions.
- It shall monitor the implemented projects.

#### **CAPACITY BUILDING Unit**

- It shall establish an information bank (with research associates, library and workshops).
- It shall network existing traditional cultural/ritual groups, especially related to some cultural heritage of the area (in the degree of association to inheritance, concern and management) and to relevant technical expertise.
- It shall find out what these groups lack.

It shall channelise conservation funds and professional support to improve the conservation capacity of the groups.

#### **CONSERVATION FUND**

It shall accumulate all the revenues, donations and reserves coming from other institutions.

It shall distribute equitably the funds in accordance with the guidelines set up by the APEX BODY.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION Committees**

It shall consist of the people in immediate association to a particular heritage, a technical-in-charge, a financial assistant, local social leaders and mobilisers.

It shall implement the actual conservation work as per the agreed standards.

#### **Role of DOA, Municipalities/VDCs**

DOA shall monitor/evaluate the conservation work chiefly from policy perspectives.

Municipalities/VDCs shall monitor/evaluate the work from community perspectives.

#### **Role of INDEPENDENT COMMISSION**

It shall consist of NGOs, PVOs representatives chosen as according to a degree of consistent concern shown.

It shall monitor/evaluate the role and function of each of the components of the implementation scheme.

#### **Conclusion**

The criteria developed in the Part One of the paper tells us the direction in which we may now focus our attention for the most appropriate conservation of 55-window palace. The implementation scheme based on Bottom Up, Local, Transparent and Accountable features is devised in Part Two to meet the need to address the incompleteness of the proposals put forward so far.

**Table 1**

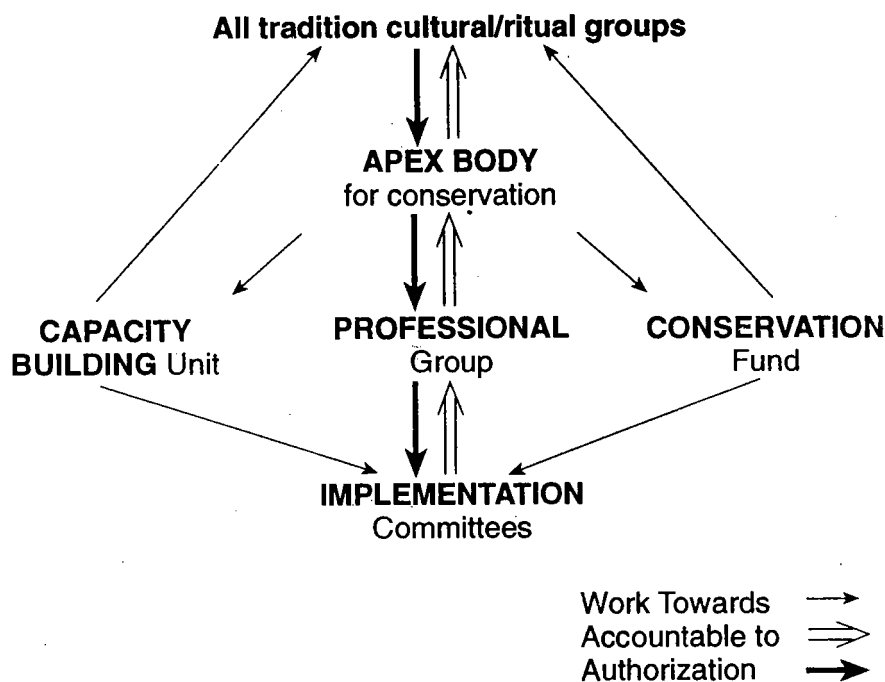
Applying the criteria to a few of the competing proposals of 55-windows palace conservation<sup>15</sup>

| Criteria                            | Pre-Mann<br><1993 | Mann et<br>al 1993 | Kastee<br>et al<br>1995 | Mann<br>1996 | Maskey<br>et al<br>1997 | XXX<br>When? |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Adequacy                         |                   |                    |                         |              |                         |              |
| A. Minimum intervention             |                   |                    |                         |              |                         |              |
| Historical Authenticity preserved   |                   |                    |                         |              |                         | √            |
| Further deterioration prevented     |                   | √                  | √                       | √            | √                       | √            |
| Justify its need rationally         |                   | √                  | √                       | √            | √                       | √            |
| B. Contextualization                |                   |                    |                         |              |                         |              |
| Context is preserved                |                   |                    |                         |              |                         | √            |
| Post intervention contextualization |                   |                    |                         |              |                         | √            |
| More than visual conservation       |                   |                    |                         |              | ?                       | √            |
| C. Conservation of capacity         |                   |                    |                         |              |                         |              |
| Local technology                    |                   |                    | √                       |              | √                       | √            |
| Local resources                     |                   |                    | √                       |              | √                       | √            |
| Local conservation practices        |                   |                    |                         |              |                         | √            |
| 2. Reversibility                    |                   |                    |                         |              |                         |              |
| Reversible                          |                   | ?                  |                         | ?            | √                       | √            |
| Extent and consequences known       |                   |                    |                         |              | ?                       | √            |
| 3. Sustainability                   |                   |                    |                         |              |                         |              |
| Compatible                          |                   |                    | √                       |              | √                       | √            |
| Easy to adopt                       |                   |                    | √                       |              | √                       | √            |
| Post-intervention strategy          |                   |                    |                         |              |                         | √            |
| Affordable and manageable           | √                 |                    | √                       |              | √                       | √            |



**Chart 1**

**The most appropriate conservation scheme**



**Notes**

1. The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, UNESCO (or OGIWHC) lists 'a significant loss in historical authenticity' as an ascertained danger to the properties listed in the World Heritage List. But what exactly constitutes historical authenticity is not clear. Modifying the original structure does influence the future interpretation on the historicity of the heritage, but what about the substitution of construction materials with the different ones, or even with the similar but newer ones?
2. Conservation is not reconstruction. The definition given by Sir Bernard Feilden is worth mentioning here: Conservation is the action taken to prevent decay (Feilden, 1982:3). In other words, conservation is not generally about corrective measures but about preventive measures. What has happened is a part of the history of the property. What may happen should be the central concern of any conservation work. Only at the extreme situations when all other possibilities to maintain it in quasi-static state are exhausted, or when there is an intolerable intervention in its integrity that a reconstruction (only of a part) may be allowed.

3. Article 10 of the Charter of Venice stresses this point with regard to a choice of non-conventional technology to be used in conservation.
4. The point of departure from the present conservation requirement needs not to be overstated here. The contextualization is very important requirement in the case of 'culturally live' heritage. A culturally live heritage may be defined as the heritage, which is a node of the current cultural fabric of the people concerned. The approach to conservation of a property of purely historical nature should be essentially different than that of a historical property still having some cultural function.
5. Visual conservation is an approach to conservation that gives sole emphasis in similarity in appearance before and after the intervention. According to this viewpoint, a monument must look same. While visibility is an important consideration in assessing the effect of any intervention, it needs not to be the only one. We argue that any attempt in reducing the integrity of a monument to its visible dimension has many unwarranted consequences.
6. The use of these terms implies that the assumption that a particular heritage located in a place is a product of the culture and civilization of the people living in and around the place need not to be always valid. We, however wish to make it clear that any conservation technology needs to relate a heritage to either the technology practiced during the historical era of which the heritage is a relic or to technology of the people who inherits the heritage.
7. The requirement of reversibility becomes important from a realization that (1) our knowledge of the past, and consequently of all historical knowledge is fragmentary (and hence the technological intervention that we propose may not be the best of all possible interventions), and (2) we should not in any way prejudice possible future interventions. What constitute the precise definition of a reversible technology may, however be debatable. But a reversible intervention is the one which, when and if redone, would leave the minimum scars, as it were, on the heritage.
8. It is important to link any conservation technology either to the knowledge of the historical period of which the heritage is a relic, or to the knowledge of the people who inherits it. The former is qualitatively better. But in the case of Newar cultural heritage, we are fortunate enough to have (1) a few surviving craftsmen with a more or less uncorrupted knowledge of their traditional technologies, and (2) a few thousand manuals, drawing books and related manuscripts that could shed light on many missing elements preserved with the practitioners.

Any conservation technology selected for a Newar cultural heritage must have a proven basis.

9. Here the emphasis is on the maintenance strategy to be adopted. Regular and preventive maintenance is undoubtedly, the most effective. A conservation technology should be lending to future maintenance works. In fact, such long-term strategies have to be clearly spelled out in any proposal for conservation.
10. There may be doubts over the applicability of the above mentioned criteria to any of the proposals put forward, the reason being that those are not conservation proposals as such. We do agree that, however, we would also like to add that such 'non-applicability' is the consequence of the incompleteness of the proposals and not of the invalidity of the criteria themselves!
11. Some may view this as a prejudice, but as far as these proposals are concerned, Nepalese professionals seem to respect the local tradition of conservation more than others do. They tend to prioritize restoration over strengthening. The latter is granted the central importance by the others. If this difference in approach to conservation has anything to do with a different degree of cultural sensitivity of the professionals, it may be an interesting digression.
12. The only excuse that has been devised for the present top down approach is that there is a lack of awareness about the importance of conservation among the people. This excuse can be dismissed without a second thought. It is not lack of awareness but that of resources which turn the concerned people apathetic towards the conservation. Mere survival at present relinquishes their need for the conserved past.
13. A local and bottom-up approach puts the bottom most unit of the current conservation hierarchy at the center. At the bottom most layer lie a cultural property owner or a cultural unit (a *guthi*, a *sangha* etc.) or a loose group of ritually connected individuals. The bottom-upping involves (1) allowing their priority to influence the course of conservation, (2) building their capacity to look after their heritage indefinitely and (3) reactivating them as agents (and other institutions as facilitators) of the conservation works.
14. Some may like to believe that the current practices of letting the general public know what an institution wishes to do, is an act of transparency. In fact, it is not. In the context of any conservation work, the definition of transparency may be rephrased as a state of a system in which a holder guarantees non discriminate, quick and unrestricted access to any information concerning proposals, implementation

procedures, financial dealings and evaluation mechanisms as and when a seeker requires.

15. The assessment of the various proposals is based on their features cited in the correspondence with Dr. Hideo Noguchi, in Maskey et al and in personal communication with Er Kaste.

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**Postscript:**

The "National Seminar on Conservation of the 55-Window Palace" held on March 11-13, 2000 in Bhaktapur adopted the following resolutions apart from others

*The conservation policy guidelines will be:*

- *Minimum Intervention,*
- *In situ restoration,*
- *Maintenance to its original shape, size and design,*
- *Maximum use of the original construction material and*
- *Indigenous technology and workmanship.*
- *The post conservation use of the palace shall be culturally permissible one.*

These resolutions are sufficiently discrete in resolving some of the long-standing debates over the selection of appropriate technology and construction materials. This is certainly a remarkable outcome. But the seminar in general fell short to address a few important issues pointed in the paper. For example, no proposal addressed the need for making conservation an autonomous affair of the concerned group of people associated closely to a particular heritage. An effort in this direction would have resulted in the bottom upping of the whole conservation implementation mechanism, and that would have been an important step forward.

## जंगबहादुर राणाको जीवनी र कृतिसंग सम्बद्ध एक टिपोट

गंगा खरेल  
ने.ए.अ.के. / त्रि.वि.

आधुनिक नेपालको इतिहासमा जंगबहादुर कुंवर राणाको स्थान महत्त्वपूर्ण छ। यो स्थान उनले नेपाललाई आधुनिकतातर्फ लगेको वा नेपाली राष्ट्रको विकासका लागि महत्त्वपूर्ण देन दिएकाले होइन, बरू सुगौली सन्धिपश्चात् जेनतेन सिंगो राष्ट्रको रूपमा अगाडि पाइला चाल्न लागेको नेपालमा तत्कालीन गृहकलहजन्य परिस्थितिको फाइदा उठाई तरवार र दरवारी शक्तिको आडमा कुंवर-राणाहरूको जहानियाँ एकतन्त्री शासन स्थापना गर्न सक्षम भएकोले प्राप्त भएको हो। सामान्य जनताको छोराको रूपमा जन्मिएर पछि सार्वजनिक प्रतिष्ठाको पदमा पुग्न सफल भई प्रधानमन्त्री जंगबहादुर राणाले आफूलाई 'श्री ३ महाराजा' घोषित गराई नवसिर्जित प्रतिष्ठाको अर्द्ध राजकीय पद सम्हाली एकछत्र र एकतन्त्रीय राज्य कायम गरे। त्यसपछिका १०४ वर्षहरू (१८४६-१९५० ई.) नेपालको इतिहासमा नेपाली जनताका लागि दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण दिनको रूपमा साबित भए।

इतिहासकारहरूले जंगबहादुरलाई अनेक ढंगले हेरेका छन्। तत्कालीन भारतको ब्रिटिश इस्टइण्डिया कम्पनी सरकारलाई रिभाई आफ्ना जनताको दमन गर्ने जंगबहादुर साहसी, क्रूर तथा बहुआयामिक व्यक्तित्व मानिन्छन्।

जंगबहादुरका समयमा लेखिएको भनिने यो संक्षिप्त टिपोट त्र्यौड, काठमाडौँका स्व. सिद्धिलालज्यूबाट प्राप्त भएको हो। यस टिपोटमा जंगबहादुरको जीवनी र उनले गरेका कार्यहरूबारे संक्षिप्त रूपमा उल्लेख पाइन्छ। लेखकले जंगबहादुरसँगसम्बन्धित मुख्य घटनाहरूलाई फिहरिस्तको रूपमा उल्लेख गरेकाले पाठकहरूलाई रुचिकर हुने देखी यहाँ प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ। यस फिहरिस्तमा लेखक (टिपोटकार) को नाउँ भने उल्लेख छैन। साथै जंगबहादुरको जीवनीसँग सम्बद्ध सबै घटना र कार्यहरूको फिहरिस्त पनि पूर्ण छैन र टिपोट गर्दा केही शब्दहरू अशुद्ध लेखिएका पनि छन्। त्यस्ता केही अशुद्ध र अस्पष्ट शब्दहरूको अर्थ खुलाउने प्रयास पनि यहाँ गरिएको छ। यो फिहरिस्त सम्बत् १९२६ सालको घटनापछि टुङ्गिन्छ।\*

यस कागजको भाषा र शैली जंगबहादुरको समकालीन देखिन्छ। यसैले यो लेखौट (टिपोट) प्रामाणिक लाग्दछ। टिपोटकर्ताले यसलाई वि.सं. १९२६ सालमा टुङ्ग्याई

जङ्गबहादुरको मृत्यु भएको साल वि.सं. १९३३ सम्म नल्याउनुमा के कारण निहित छ सो थाहा पाउन सकिँदैन। यसमा प्रयुक्त नेपाली शब्द र वाक्यहरूले टिपोट लेखक नेवारीभाषी भएको अनुमान हुन्छ। जंगबहादुरको बाल्यकालदेखि सम्बत् १९२६ सालसम्मका घटनाको विवरण प्रस्तुत गर्दा सानतिना घटनादेखि महत्त्वपूर्ण घटनासम्मको उल्लेख गरिएकाले पत्र लेखक राणा दरबारका गतिविधि (खासगरी जंगबहादुरको जीवनीलाई) नजिकैबाट हेर्न सक्षम रहेको देखिन्छ।

श्री:

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| श्री जङ्ग बहादुर. माहाराजाले किमत् गन्याको सवाल .....                                                                                                                                                                                                 |    |
| सम्बत् १८७९ सालमा ६ वर्षका उमेरमा पढ्न्या सिकन्या काम गन्याको                                                                                                                                                                                         | १  |
| सम्बत् १८८० सालमा ७ वर्षका उमेरमा पढ्न्या लेषन्या काम गन्याको                                                                                                                                                                                         | २  |
| सम्बत् १८८१ सालमा ८ वर्षका उमेरमा फार्सि पढ्याको                                                                                                                                                                                                      | ३  |
| सम्बत् १८८२ सालमा ९ वर्षका उमेरमा पढ्न्या काम गरि विवाहा भयाको                                                                                                                                                                                        | ४  |
| सम्बत् १८८३ सालमा १० वर्षका उमेरमा पढ्न्या काम गन्याको                                                                                                                                                                                                | ५  |
| सम्बत् १८८४ सालमा ११ वर्षका उमेरमा दुल्लुमा गै वर्ष १ सिका षेलेको                                                                                                                                                                                     | ६  |
| सम्बत् १८८५ सालमा १२ वर्षका उमेरमा दुल्लुमा वसि सिकार षेलेको                                                                                                                                                                                          | ७  |
| सम्बत् १८८६ सालमा १३ वर्षका उमेरमा श्रीजङ्गमा सुवेदारी भै धनकुटा गयाको                                                                                                                                                                                | ८  |
| सम्बत् १८८७ सालमा १४ वर्षका उमेरमा धनकुटामा वसि. उर्दि कवायेद् गरि सिकार गैह्र षेल्याको.                                                                                                                                                              | ९  |
| सम्बत् १८८८ सालमा १५ वर्षका उमेरमा धनकुटा वसि. उर्दि कवायेद् गरि सिकार गैह्र षेल्याको                                                                                                                                                                 | १० |
| सम्बत् १८८९ सालमा १६ वर्षका उमेरमा आषाड मैन्हामा धनकुटाबाट आई ढाक्रे भै दर्वारमा चाकरि गरि. पहलमान् सिकेको.                                                                                                                                           | ११ |
| सम्बत् १८९० सालमा वर्ष १७ का उमेरमा हुडेलधुरा गयाको.                                                                                                                                                                                                  | १२ |
| सम्बत् १८९१ सालमा वर्ष १८ का उमेरमा हुडेलधुरा वसि उर्दि कवायद् गरि सिकार. षेलि. कुहमाउ अलमुढाको वाटो हरिद्वार. कुरू क्षेत्रको स्नान दान गरि दर्षन् गरि. रामपुर. पहेलि भित्तिवाट मडिको वाटो. हुडेलधुराको वाटो गरि पोषरामा आई विवाहा गरि. नेपालमा आयाको | १३ |
| सम्बत् १८९२ सालमा वर्ष १९ का उमेरमा. ढाक्रे भै दर्वारमा चाकरि गरि पहलमान् सिकेको                                                                                                                                                                      | १४ |
| सम्बत् १८९३ सालमा वर्ष २० का उमेरमा चाकरि गरि कुस्ति गैह्र ईलम् सिकि जनरल. माथर्वसि थापासित कलकत्ता गयाको                                                                                                                                             | १५ |

- सम्बत् १८९४ सालमा वर्ष २१ का उमेरमा थापाहरूका मुक्त्यारि विग्र्या पछि जनरल माथवर्सि थापा दर्बारमा विदा भै लाहुराजा, कासिसम्म संगै कासिमा स्नान गरि घर फर्कि आयाको १६
- सम्बत् १८९५ सालमा वर्ष २२ का उमेरमा धनुषपल्टमा सुवेदारि भै रूपैजा राषदा वर्दवानीजापल्टमा कुमेदानी भै कुमेदानी वालि षायाको १७
- सम्बत् १८९६ सालमा वर्ष २३ का उमेरमा वर्दवानीको कुमेदानी षोसि पूर्व मोर षानावाडी तर्फ सवारि भै धनकुटावाट रूमजाटारको वाटो फर्कि घर आई वसेको १८
- सम्बत् १८९७ सालमा वर्ष २४ का उमेरमा कासिमा गै चौतरिया रणेधोज साहलाई ल्याउनु भन्या हुदा कालिवक्सपल्टमा कप्तानीमा रूपैजा राषी कासि गै नीज चौतरिया आयेनन् र राजा गुलाफसिंहसंग कासिमा मुलाकाज गरि असारमा फर्कि आई त्यो कप्तानी वालि नपाइ उसै रहि ९८ सालका वालिलाई सेरको कप्तानीमा रूपैजा राषी कप्तानि वालि षायाको १९
- सम्बत् १८९८ सालमा वर्ष २५ का उमेरमा श्री वुवाज्यु स्वर्गे भयापछि काजि भै कजाजि षानीमा सेरको कप्तानि थप गरि दुवै वालि षायाको २०
- सम्बत् १८९९ सालमा वर्ष २६ का उमेरमा कजाजी षानी षाई दर्बारमा वसि राजकाज गन्याको २१
- सम्बत् १९०० सालमा वर्ष २७ का उमेरमा षायाको कजाजी षानी षोसिना निमित्त जनरल माथवर्सि थापाले लारं साहेवलाई लिन हेटौडा सम्म जाउ भन्या निउ गरि पठायो र हेटौडा पुग्यापछि मेरो कजाजी षोषि कर्णविर पाडेलाई कजाजी दियाको २२
- सम्बत् १९०१ सालमा वर्ष २८ को उमेरमा जनरल माथवर्सि थापाका मुक्त्यारिमा ढाक्रे दर्बारमा चाकरि गन्याका रजिउदो बाघ बाघि चढ्याको २३
- सम्बत् १९०२ सालमा वर्ष २९ को उमेरमा दुर्गा वक्स कुमारी चोकमा तैनाथ पाई कजाई मान षाई राजकाज गन्याको थियो वैसाषमा माथवर्सि थापा मर्दा कालिवक्स पुराना गोरष देविदत्त ३ पल्टको तैनाथ पाई जनरल मान षाई राजकाज गन्याको २४
- सम्बत् १९०३ सालमा वर्ष ३० का उमेरमा असौजमा कोटपर्व हुदा गैह मुक्त्यारि पायापछि तेसै विचमा श्री ५ महाराजधीराजका गाथ गादीमा कांछी माहारानीले द्रोगर्दा भडालपाल प्रर्व साम्य गरि श्री ५ महाराजधीराजका गाथ गादि वचाई राज्ये थामि ६२ सालमा हरन भयाका ब्राह्मणका विर्ता सट्टा दिनु भन्या हुकुम फुकाई वक्सयाको र श्री ५ वुढा माहाराज र कांछि माहारानीलाई कासि तर्फ सवारि गयाको २५
- सम्बत् १९०४ सालमा ३१ वर्षका उमेरमा श्री ५ वुढा महाराजा कासिवाट फिर्दा अलौमा दंगा हुदा अलौ पर्व साम्य गरि श्री ५ महाराजधीराजलाई गाडिमा वसाई श्री ५ वुढा महाराजलाई दर्बारमा ल्याई वन्दोवस्त गन्याको २६



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| सम्बत् १९०५ सालमा वर्ष ३२ का उमेरमा चक्रमासामा १८ पुरानको आहुति गरि तोप गैह्र षजाना पल्टन् लि पथर घट्टा सवारि गरि वाघ गैह्र मारि माघ मैन्हामा फिरि दवरिमा आयाको                                                                                                        | २७ |
| सम्बत् १९०६ सालमा वर्ष ३३ का उमेरमा मंसिरमैन्हासम्म राजकाज गरि वेलायेत् तिनधाम तर्फ सवारि भयाको                                                                                                                                                                        | २८ |
| सम्बत् १९०७ सालमा ३४ को उमेरमा जगन्नाथ.रामनाथ. द्वारिका नाथको दर्सन गरि वेलायेत् पुगि. कुईनेन् विष दोरिया गैह्रसित भेट् मुलाकाज् गरि फिरि सुकौलिमा आई पुग्यापछि भगुवा उमराउ भारादार पिछा पर्न आउन्हाहरूलाई पिछा लि नीज भगुवा उमराउहरूलाई माना चावलदि वन्दोवस्त गन्याको | २९ |
| सम्बत् १९०८ सालमा वर्ष ३५ को उमेरमा. अधिका पुराना स्याहा श्रेष्टा मासि.नजा स्याहा श्रेष्टा षडा गरि कौसल राषी. अैन वनाई सो वमोजिम् वन्दोवस्त गन्याको टुडिषेलमा तसविर राषि चैत्र सुक्ल १५ मा प्रतिवर्ष तमासा जात्रा गन्याको                                              | ३० |
| सम्बत् १९०९ सालमा वर्ष ३६ को उमेरमा. बद्रि केदार. तर्फ सवारि भै दर्सन गन्या दर्सन. गरि. फिरि वक्स्याको र हाती षेडा गन्याको                                                                                                                                             | ३१ |
| सम्बत् १९१० सालमा वर्ष ३७ को उमेरमा भोट् तर्फ लडाजीलाई सुर गरि. षजना रसद तय्यार गन्याको                                                                                                                                                                                | ३२ |
| सम्बत् १९११ सालमा वर्ष ३८ का उमेरमा भोट्को लडाजी गर्न नजा पल्टं स्मेत् जमाजी लडाजि गर्न निमित्त चैतेमा भोट्तर्फ गयाको                                                                                                                                                  | ३३ |
| सम्बत् १९१२ सालमा वर्ष ३९ का उमेरमा. भोट् तर्फको लडाजी जिति सक्यापछि भोट्ले सालिन्दा गोर्षा सर्कारलाई सितो तिरि मान्याको                                                                                                                                               | ३४ |
| सम्बत् १९१३ सालमा वर्ष ४० को उमेरमा श्री ५ सर्कारवाट रजाजी मान पायाको                                                                                                                                                                                                  | ३५ |
| सम्बत् १९१४ सालमा वर्ष ४१ को उमेरमा लषनौतर्फ लडाजी भयाको                                                                                                                                                                                                               | ३६ |
| सम्बत् १९१५ सालमा वर्ष ४२ को उमेरमा रेविलहरूसित लडाजी गन्याको र नवाफ विर्तिस कदर ल्यायाको                                                                                                                                                                              | ३७ |
| सम्बत् १९१६ सालमा वर्ष ४३ का उमेरमा लषनौ लडाजी फते हुदा जिसिविको ईलकापर चिनवासाहवाट कल्कि पायाको र नजा मुलुक पायाको                                                                                                                                                    | ३८ |
| सम्बत् १९१७ सालमा वर्ष ४४ का उमेरमा नाना वालाराउका जाहान् ल्यायाको र कोट्याहुति यज्ञ गन्याको                                                                                                                                                                           | ३९ |
| सम्बत् १९१८ सालमा वर्ष ४५ का उमेरमा विश्वरूप ढाल्नु र. निजका मदिल वनाई कोट्याहुति भयाको                                                                                                                                                                                | ४० |
| सम्बत् १९१९ सालमा वर्ष ४६ का उमेरमा वागमति गैह्र ठाउठाउ गरि जमापुल ९ र गोर्कनका वन्मा पर्षाल लगाई गिर्दा पर्षाल सिध्याई तयार गन्याको                                                                                                                                   | ४१ |
| सम्बत् १९२० सालमा वर्ष ४७ का उमेरमा विश्वरूप थापना र कार्तिक कृस्नप(क्ष)मा नीजको प्रतिवर्ष वन्धन पुजा जात्रा गन्याको र गुज्येश्वरिमा सुनको कलेस कमल पानस अर्पन गरि चह्याको                                                                                             | ४२ |

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| सम्बत् १९२१ सालमा वर्ष ४८ का उमेरमा. कोट्याहुति ३ र श्रीजंत्र दान भयाको                                                | ४३ |
| सम्बत् १९२२ सालमा वर्ष ४९ का उमेरमा चक्रमास मैन्हा ४ सम्म जातजातका त्वला दान भयाको                                     | ४४ |
| सम्बत् १९२३ सालमा वर्ष ५० का उमेरमा राजकाज गन्याको                                                                     | ४५ |
| सम्बत् १९२४ सालमा वर्ष ५१ का उमेरमा गुज्येश्वरिका देवल सतल र रानीवनको सबै गिर्दा पर्षाल लगायाको                        | ४६ |
| सम्बत् १९२५ सालमा वर्ष ५२ को उमेरमा. राज गैह्र गन्याको                                                                 | ४७ |
| सम्बत् १९२६ सालमा वर्ष ५३ का उमेरमा पश्चीमतर्फ सवारिमा वेलायेतका साहज्यादासंग मुलाकाज भयाको र नीजलाई बाघ मराई वकस्याको | ४८ |

### शब्दार्थ :

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| रामपुर            | - भारतको उत्तर प्रदेश राज्यमा पर्ने रामपुर क्षेत्र                                                                                                                                        |
| अलमुडा            | - उत्तर भारतको कुमाउँ गढवाल क्षेत्रमा अवस्थित अलमोडा                                                                                                                                      |
| मडि (को)          | - ब्रह्मदेव मण्डि                                                                                                                                                                         |
| माधवर्सि          | - नेपालका तत्कालीन प्रधानमन्त्री माधवसिंह थापा                                                                                                                                            |
| लारं              | - ब्रिटिश भारतका गर्भनर लारेन्स                                                                                                                                                           |
| मुत्तयारि         | - मुख्तियारि (प्रधान मन्त्री)                                                                                                                                                             |
| चह्या             | - चढे                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| रामनाथ (रामेश्वर) | - दक्षिण भारतको तमिलनाडु राज्यमा पर्ने प्रशिद्ध रामेश्वरम् मन्दिर                                                                                                                         |
| जिसिवि            | - बेलायतका तत्कालीन राजकुमार कन्सर्ट (H.R.H. Prince Consort) ले जंग बहादुर राणालाई त्यस समयमा सम्मानपूर्वक दिएको प्रथम श्रेणीको सैनिक पदवी (Knights Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath) |
| चिवसहवाट          | - चीन बादशाहबाट                                                                                                                                                                           |
| नाना वालराउ       | - दक्षिण भारतको महाराष्ट्र (मराठा) राज्यका तत्कालीन पेशवा शासक                                                                                                                            |
| साहज्यादा         | - बेलायतका तत्कालीन राजकुमार अल्बर्ट (H.R.H. Prince Albert)                                                                                                                               |

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## REVIEW ARTICLE

# LEARNING NEPALI THE SOAS WAY

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*Teach Yourself Nepali: A Complete Course in Understanding, Speaking and Writing.* 1999. Michael Hutt and Abhi Subedi. London: Teach Yourself Books, Hodder & Stoughton Ltd. xi + 308 pages. 2 cassettes. UK book price: £14.99. Nepali price: Nrs 465. ISBN 0-340-71130-2.

### Introduction

Despite being relatively small both in terms of size and population, Nepal and her national language have exerted a considerable influence across the northern reaches of South Asia. Home to more than 80 languages hailing from four different language families, Nepal has more need of a common tongue than many other countries twice her size. Outside of Nepal's present borders, Nepali is widely used in Sikkim and Darjeeling, prompting its recognition as a major language in India by the Indian Constitution. Even in the mountainous kingdom of Bhutan, the Nepali language is both spoken and understood. Nepali is, in short, a *lingua franca* of the central and eastern Himalaya.

Since the opening of Nepal's borders in 1951, a whole new group of potential Nepali language learners has emerged. Foreign volunteers, teachers, doctors, academics, missionaries, hippies and businessmen, to mention but a few of the interest groups coming to Nepal, have all sought to learn the national language over the past 40 years. It is surprising that despite the high profile of these visitors to Nepal and their relatively large numbers, no single pedagogical textbook has emerged which answers their needs. On one level, of course, the diversity of these foreign learners and their differing priorities provides the explanation. Some students have need of a language course which places an emphasis on conversational Nepali, particularly useful in a village context, whilst others prefer more literary

approaches to the language —learning the script alongside Sanskritic vocabulary.

The publication earlier this year of the newest addition to the *Teach Yourself Books* series is a cause for joy to scholars and students of the Nepali language. *Teach Yourself Nepali*, co-authored by Dr. Michael Hutt and Professor Abhi Subedi, is no small achievement, particularly since it covers the most salient grammatical features of the language in just over 300 pages. The book marks a watershed in courses for learning the Nepali language in at least two ways. First, it dispels the assumption that learning Nepali is necessarily difficult by presenting grammatical features of the language as well as key vocabulary in an intelligent and extremely accessible manner. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the book once and for all demonstrates that fluency in the spoken vernacular can be achieved alongside an aptitude in literate written Nepali. The importance of this second feature of the *Teach Yourself Course* must not be underestimated and it is a point to which I will return later in the article. To properly assess the strength of Hutt and Subedi's book, however, their contribution needs to be situated in the context of other works on the Nepali language, and it is to these that I now turn.

### **The Tourist-Oriented Phrasebook**

It is not so much the lack of textbooks and primers that is to be lamented, but rather their inconsistent nature and often dubious quality. Aside from the more serious attempts which I will deal with in due course, Nepali pedagogical materials have ranged from the unclear to the downright misleading. To cite but a few: *Nepalese Companion & Instructor* (Simple Self Taught Series, Kathmandu); *Learn Nepali In A Month Through English And Hindi* (Simple Smooth Scientific, Read Well Publications, New Delhi); *Beginning Nepali: For Foreign Learner* [sic] (Sajha Press, Kathmandu) and *Get By In Nepalese: A Crash Course For Tourists And Visitors* (Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu). One such primer deserves particular attention. The *Nepali Phrasebook: A Pilgrims Key to Nepali*, published by Pilgrims Book House with neither date nor author, claims that: “there are three principal languages, Sanskrit, Newari, and Nepali, used in Nepal since the Kingdom's earliest history ...After the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the common use of Sanskrit diminished in the Valley. However, even today it is considered the refined language of literature and religion” (Introduction: 1). The ignorance and bias shown by this anonymous phrasebook are demonstrably clear, and the pamphlet warrants no further attention.

The ‘quick results approach’, in which accuracy is sacrificed for basic communication, is symptomatic of many of these less professional Nepali

language primers and phrasebooks. A regrettably persistent fallacy seems to be in operation here: that new learners of a foreign language must be protected from the more complicated grammatical constructions until they are already somewhat advanced in their studies. There is nothing worse for a student's confidence than to learn one 'simpler' form at the beginning of a language course, only to be informed some lessons later that the construction is actually undesirable. Given that learning a new language is a challenge whichever way one approaches it, it seems only prudent to learn the correct form from the outset (even if this requires a little more patience), than to have faithfully learnt a construction which is then jettisoned three chapters further on.

### **The Peace Corps Approach**

Of the four pedagogical works I will deal with, only one was written solely by native speakers. Entitled *Basic Course in Spoken Nepali* (most recently reprinted in 1996), and written by Tika B. Karki and Chij K. Shrestha, the book has become well-known for its Peace Corps connection. The authors, "Trainers and Language Specialists" (Preface: ii) with the Peace Corps, wrote the book "with the needs of ...the volunteers of Nepal in mind" (Preface: i). For some time it was the only Nepali language course widely available in bookshops in Kathmandu, and as a result has guided and influenced many foreign learners of Nepali. The book's popularity is well-deserved, and its lasting impact on generations of foreign volunteers in Nepal is unquestionable. It does, nevertheless, have a couple of drawbacks, the most important one being the chosen transliteration system. Rather than using the tried and tested method of Indological transcription, the authors opt for the somewhat unsightly *aa* for *ā*, *T* for *ṭ*, *D* for *ḍ* and *chh* for *ch*. This leads to unwieldy romanized examples such as "wahāākaa āākhaa khulaa chhan ki banda chhan?" (page 69). The absence of the Devanāgarī script in the body of the text is all the more regrettable given that the authors use it in their "Introduction To The Nepali Sound System", which takes up the first 15 pages (i-xv), but then dispense with it for the rest of the book until the "Reading and Writing Section" which starts some 258 pages later. The course is geared to getting the student conversant in Nepali, and this is achieved admirably, but somewhat at the expense of accuracy and literacy. For example, the *-eko* form is introduced in Lesson One, with the following disclaimer:

"In informal situations the **eko** form is commonly used in Simple Past, Past Perfect and Present Progressive Tense. However, in formal speech conjugated forms of verbs which will be introduced later, are more common." (page 5)



Perhaps it would have been better to introduce the simple past tense before the potentially confusing *-eko* form, since the authors even acknowledge that its use is undesirable. All in all though, any pedagogical book must be measured according to its stated objective. In *Basic Course in Spoken Nepali*, the aim is for the student to be speaking chatty and conversational Nepali (in a very short time) which he or she has learnt through an informal and fun course. This end is successfully achieved.

### **Clark's Introduction to Nepali**

The three remaining contributions to Nepali language materials which I will deal with in this article have come from scholars at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London. SOAS has long been a centre of excellence within Europe for South Asian languages, and the academic lineage of the various scholars of Nepali through the generations would make for an interesting study in itself.

The first Nepali language handbook to come from SOAS was T. W. Clark's *Introduction to Nepali*. First published in 1963, it took over 25 years before it was finally reprinted in India in 1989 by the Nepali publishing house, Ratna Pustak Bhandar. Clark was 'Sometime Professor of Bengali' at the University of London, and met Puskar Shamsheer Jang Bahadur Rana when he travelled to Nepal in 1951, with whom he worked until Rana's death in 1960. Not only was Rana, who worked as Clark's language assistant, a well-established figure in Kathmandu at the time, but the other Nepali national directly involved in this project, whose voice can be heard on the audio cassettes which were to accompany the course, later became famous in his own right. These tape recordings were made by none other than Dor Bahadur Bista, whose association with the University of London was not limited to Clark. As a young man, Bista worked as a research assistant alongside Christoph von Föhrer-Haimendorf, Professor of Anthropology at SOAS, during the latter's field trips to Mustang and Dolpo. The author of many influential books, Bista himself went on to become Professor of Anthropology at Tribhuvan University.

Clark's *Introduction to Nepali* is an excellent introductory textbook to the language. Nevertheless, students have been, and will continue to be, put off by the layout, typesetting and content of the book, all of which have not aged well. One of the most intriguing, and at points irritating, features of Clark's book is the inclusion of what he terms "intonation notings, which mark both stress and relative pitch" but which he suggests "call for no special explanation" (page 1). If the latter is true, then one cannot help wondering why these 'notings' are used so pervasively from Exercises 1 through 13. Throughout these exercises, they only serve to distract the

reader's eye from the content of the examples. Other readers will be forgiven for finding some of the sample sentences a little outdated and old-fashioned, such as "Fifteen pice will not be enough to buy all that" (page 42) or "Oh, I thought you were a captain already, but you are only a lieutenant" (page 270). However, in terms of clarity of grammatical explanation, and well-chosen examples to clarify the explanations, Clark's book is excellent. One of the best features of the textbook, which has not been replicated elsewhere, is the choice the author gives the reader of learning Nepali either through Devanāgarī or through his accurate home-grown system of phonemic romanization. His deviation from standard Indological transliteration should be excused because he offers his own phonologically-sound transcription. A few small quibbles aside then, *Introduction to Nepali* remains a veritable achievement.

#### **Matthews' *A Course in Nepali***

Such unreserved praise can unfortunately not be extended to the second contribution to the field of pedagogical materials for Nepali learners emerging from London. Written by David Matthews, Senior Lecturer in Urdu and Nepali at SOAS, and entitled *A Course in Nepali*, it is already in its second edition and even in its second Indian reprint, despite being published comparatively recently (1984). Although more widely available than Clark's *Introduction* (which is at present being reprinted), as well as slightly more user-friendly, Matthews' *Course* adds little to Clark's careful and more definitive work. Moreover, Matthews makes some basic errors, a few of which have thankfully been weeded out in the new edition (see Publisher's note: iii). Some mistakes remain, however, most notably in his awkward explanation of the difference between *ho* and *cha*, both third person singular forms of the verb 'to be'. Rather than clarifying a subtle grammatical point, Matthews' explanation only serves to blur the distinction, and his prescriptive rules in many cases would lead any reader to formulate ungrammatical sentences (see pages 23-24). A further problem with Matthews' *Course* is that he consciously deviates from indigenous standards of orthography. The sample of Nepali handwriting offered on pages 21-22 is manifestly non-native and the vowel alternates on page 22 seem to replicate a typewriter more than any genuine Nepali penmanship. Whilst Matthews rightly dispenses with Clark's idiosyncratic 'intonation notings', he adds a new quirk of his own: the indiscriminate use of the *halanta* or *virām*. On page 3 Matthews informs us that its use is "unfortunately sporadic" in Nepali books, and so he decides to use it "consistently throughout this course". Although his motive is noble, namely to assist Nepali language learners who might well be unsure

whether or not the final *a* is mute at the end of any given word, the result is as typographically unsightly as it is inconsistent. Matthews would have done better to take the lead from literary Nepali where the use of the *virām* is not as sporadic as he suggests. For a full discussion of the uses of this symbol, see van Driem (forthcoming). Perhaps a thorough re-write by a native speaker would make Matthews' *Course* a more useful resource.

### **The SOAS Heritage**

A point of concern is the absence of any reference to Clark in the Preface or Introduction of either Matthews' or Hutt and Subedi's books. This is all the more surprising given that John Burton-Page, in the *Editor's Preface* to the re-edition of Clark's *Introduction to Nepali*, expresses his gratitude to Matthews, some of whose "suggestions", we are told, he has been able to incorporate (1989: xviii). Hutt and Subedi also include a *Further Reading* sub-section, but here the reader is referred only to Matthews' *Course* to "supplement [one's] understanding of Nepali grammar" (page 3). Not only is this a rather moot point, given that Matthews' views on Nepali grammar are unorthodox at best, but the lack of any reference in this section to Clark's far more informed (not to mention recently republished) textbook is surprising. Moreover, on page 165, Hutt and Subedi reproduce a text adapted from a passage of Clark's *Introduction*, but once again there is mention of neither the book's availability nor of its value as a Nepali language course. Given the high profile of the Nepali scholars at SOAS as well as their chronological lineage (from Clark, via Matthews, to Hutt), the absence of any reference to Clark's work is disconcerting. It appears that Clark has been forgotten along the way.

On a lighter and more ironic note, some readers will certainly have noticed that as the textbooks have decreased in length over time and across generations of SOAS scholars (Clark: 421 pages, Matthews: 344 pages, and Hutt and Subedi: 308 pages), so too their respective titles have become all the more comprehensive and impressive-sounding. Starting with the modestly-titled *Introduction to Nepali*, via *A Course in Nepali* to the all-inclusive *A Complete Course in Understanding, Speaking and Writing Nepali*. One can but wonder how much shorter the next Nepali coursebook to come from SOAS will be, and how much more all-encompassing its title will sound.

### **Hutt and Subedi's *Teach Yourself Nepali***

Both writers of this superb book were excellently suited to the project. Michael James Hutt is Reader in Nepali and Himalayan Studies in the Department of the Languages and Cultures of South Asia, School of

Oriental and African Studies, London, and has many years of experience teaching students Nepali. He is, moreover, the leading British expert on the Nepali language and its literature, and has an impressive list of excellent publications to his name. Abhi Subedi is Professor of English as well as Chair of the Central Department of English at Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu. Subedi has established a name for himself in various disciplines, including poetry and literary criticism. The publication last year of *Ekai Kawaguchi: The Trespassing Insider* clearly shows him to be an accomplished prose writer, whilst recent articles of his deal with the pragmatic and contextual uses of both Nepali and English. My emphasis on the qualifications of the two authors is intentional. In a joint enterprise such as writing a language course, effective collaboration is essential, and it is clear that Hutt and Subedi have each been able to contribute their respective expertise and experience to the project. The fact that all other substantial pedagogical materials on the Nepali language have been authored solely by a native speaker or by a non-native speaker has been one of their greatest failings. The need for native speaker fluency together with the perspective of a non-native speaker seems self-evident, and in this respect *Teach Yourself Nepali* is a new departure. That their book captures the very flavour of the Nepali language is a tribute to Anglo-Nepali collaboration.

*Teach Yourself Nepali* has a human edge, from the user-friendly grammatical explanations to the real-life conversations and dialogues with which the reader is presented in each chapter of the book. The risk of such an approach is, of course, that what is gained in terms of simplicity of explanation is met with a concomitant loss in thoroughness. The authors were careful to avoid such a trap, and in the process have produced an excellent pedagogical work which fills a genuine gap in the market. *Teach Yourself Nepali* will be read, studied and used by academics, development workers, mountaineers, tourists and linguists alike.

The language course is divided into 24 chapters, each containing one or more true-to-life Nepali conversations. Whether it be a little gossip about the wealth of Jyoti's father, the pros and cons of village versus urban life, or bargaining with a shopkeeper at the market, Hutt and Subedi manage to capture and crystallise the essence of an archetypal Nepali discussion. On occasion, the authors include a sidebar on some social or cultural feature of Nepali life, such as an insightful explanation of the concept of *jūtho* (page 110), an aside on Nepali poets (page 133) and even an overview of religion in Nepal (page 205). Although a little short, these cultural observations are invariably interesting and well-written. Perhaps there could even have been a few more of them on topics such as caste or nationalism. One noteworthy

absence, however, is the lack of any reference to shamanism or animism in the page-long review of religion in Nepal.

In their **Introduction**, Hutt and Subedi make an important point. The Nepali language, we are informed, “has a range of different styles and levels of sophistication” (page 1) and when in doubt, the authors have chosen to “err towards the more grammatically correct” (page 2). To anyone who has spent much time in the Kingdom of Nepal, the diglossia between spoken and written Nepali, as well as the significant local variations in grammar and vocabulary, is a very real feature of the language. It is a credit to the authors that they have managed to tread a linguistic middle-way in their coursebook, and in so doing have found a register of the Nepali language which will be widely acceptable to all.

On the whole, clear and concise explanations are a hallmark of this book. Nepali phonology, or what they call the ‘sound system’, is carefully explained with the use of good examples (pages 6-19). The difference between *ra* and *ani* is presented in a way which is genuinely illuminating (page 60), and the authors are right to draw attention to the fact that in certain cases, the simple past tense in Nepal should be translated with the present perfect in English (page 109).

In a few situations, one could disagree either with the order in which grammatical features of Nepali have been presented or with the wording of the explanation itself. One example would be the decision by the authors to refrain from introducing the *-ne* infinitive form of the verb until over half way through the book. Although Hutt and Subedi are absolutely right that learners “sometimes use it excessively” (page 182), would not the fact that speakers nevertheless “find it so convenient” (ibid.) be a good reason for introducing it earlier in the course? A confusing inconsistency in the explanation of the plural suffix *-harū* may well cause learners some problems. The authors state that if “the number is plural, there is no need to add the plural suffix” (page 48), but then in each of the answers to the six questions in Exercise 9, the plural suffix is added. At no point do the authors clarify the situation and the learner is left unnecessarily confused. On page 125, the reader is introduced to the useful and idiomatic *ke re?* for hearsay information. Hutt and Subedi rightly note that *ke re?* is a “quick way” of asking, but fail to mention that it can also be quite rude in the wrong company. If, for example, when speaking with a senior, whom one would naturally address as *tapāī*, one were to use the phrase *ke re?* for asking a third person what he had said, it would come across as rather impolite. Two further omissions worthy of note: first the absence of any reference to the widely used verbal construction *bhaihālcha* or *bhaihālyo* which literally peppers everyday Nepali speech, but which is strangely

absent from their language course; and second the absence of the ‘contrary-to-expectation’ marker <po...ta>, a minor yet important feature of Nepali grammar. Aside from these quibbles, though, the reader is in good hands when it comes to grammatical explanations.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the accuracy of the spelling and type-setting. The single greatest shortcoming of *Teach Yourself Nepali* lies in the frightfully poor copy-editing and countless spelling mistakes. There are so many errors, in fact, that they can be broken down into different classes. For those readers who have already purchased a copy of *Teach Yourself Nepali*, it is the reviewer’s hope that the following corrections may function somewhat like a list of errata which should be pencilled in by hand. First come the widespread mistakes in transliteration. An abbreviated list runs as follows: **Ganeś** should be **Gaṇeś** (page 27); **gañ** should be **gāñ** (Exercise 5, page 36); **ṭaḍhā** should be **ṭaḍhā** (page 57); **gañharū** should be **gāñharū** (page 59); **buva** should be **buṇā** (Exercise 14, page 267) and **ṭhūlo** should be **ṭhūlo** (Exercise 18, page 269). The **English-Nepali Glossary**, which runs from pages 302-308, is the section of the book most badly affected by these oversights in spelling and transliteration. In just seven pages of a little over 500 lexical entries, there are six mistakes and one inconsistency—not a very high accuracy ratio for a pedagogical teaching aid to be used for self-study. The errors are as follows: **curā** should be **cūrā** (page 302); **gaī** should be **gāī** (page 303); **ṭaḍhā** should be **ṭaḍhā** (page 303); **miṭhāī** should be **miṭhāī** (page 307); **budhvār** should be **budhavār** and **āimaī** should be **āimāī** (both on page 308). Furthermore, on page 16, ‘sadness’ is transliterated as **duḥkha** whilst in the glossary it is rendered as **duḥkh** (page 306).

The second class of errors are those in the lost word or inconsistency department. In the last sentence on page 60, the word **पुष्प** is present in Devanāgarī and yet totally absent from the transliteration; in Exercise 15 (page 65) there is a sudden and unexplained shift to lower case for personal names in transliteration, i.e. **gautam** rather than **Gautam**, when everywhere else in the book proper names are capitalised; on page 44, **chorāchorī** is transliterated as one word whilst in Exercise 17, it is hyphenated and rendered as **chorā-chorī** (page 67); and on page 263, the reader is offered two different spellings for the Nepali kinship term for ‘younger brother-in-law, son-in-law’ on the very same page. My point here is not that one spelling is necessarily right and that one is necessarily wrong, in fact even Sir Ralph Lilley Turner offers three different spellings, **juwāī**, **jawāī** and **jwāī** (1997: 221, line 42, right side), but simply that the Devanāgarī spellings and transliterations *have to be* consistent in a language coursebook. The page of kinship terms (page 263) seems to be

particularly badly affected by such mistakes. One more example will serve to prove the point: the authors offer a form for ‘mother’s brother’s wife’ which is not to be found in any Nepali dictionary. There are three possible spellings of which I am aware, *māiju*, *māijū* and *māijyū*; but *māija*, which the reader is offered on page 263, is either a mistake or an extremely unconventional form. Since the kinship term appears nowhere else in the course, not even in the glossary, learners will be left thinking that *māija* is the correct form for ‘maternal aunt’.

The final set of errors, which dog the **Key To Exercises** section at the end of the course, are the most irritating. *Teach Yourself Nepali* is a course marketed as being suitable for self-study. Alongside the otherwise excellent cassettes, the 308 page book is all that the student has in order to learn the language. Moreover, in a self-study course such as this one, exercises are the *only* way in which the student is tested on the grammatical constructions and vocabulary that he or she has learnt. Mistakes in the answers to these exercises, then, threaten to undermine the book’s integrity as a language course. Just two examples of such errors will suffice. First, in the answer to Sentence 5, Exercise 4, on page 264, the Nepali runs as: नयाँ राम्रो राजा whilst the transliteration offers only **rāmro rājā**. The unexplained presence of the word **nayā**, which is also absent from the question on page 33, will undoubtedly lead to confusion. Finally, an element of surrealism seems to have slipped into all three answers to Exercise 54. The student is asked to translate the following sentence into Nepali: “A kilo of ghee was not enough for the woman who cooked the food” (page 183), but the translation given on page 276 seems to be answering a completely different question: खाना पकाएकी आइमाईलाई दस रुपियाँले पुगेन, which could be rendered in English as: “Ten rupees was not enough for the woman who cooked the food”. Whilst the first edition of any book is bound to have a few such errors, the sheer volume of mistakes and inconsistencies in a relatively short pedagogical course book of this type simply fails to inspire confidence. No author can be expected to be able to pick out all such niggling errors from his or her own work, and the responsibility for these mistakes must lie fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the publishing house. It is shocking that a publisher of such high repute as Hodder & Stoughton failed to find a copy editor with fluency in Nepali. There are plenty of literate Nepalis living in London who would be itching for a prestigious job of this kind, not to mention a good few million living in Nepal itself. The reviewer would urge the publisher, Hodder & Stoughton, to print a corrected second edition of this otherwise invaluable Nepali language coursebook immediately. When they do so, let us hope that at least one of the three



samples of imperfect Nepali handwriting which appear on page 18 will be discarded and replaced by a model of exemplary Nepali penmanship worthy of such a book.

### Concluding Remarks

Despite the abundance of errors, the success of Hutt and Subedi's *Teach Yourself Nepali* lies in the authors' ability to have learnt from both the mistakes and the strengths of the previous language textbooks, and then to have added some genuine linguistic flair of their own. While Karki and Shrestha's *Basic Course in Spoken Nepali* is strong in the vernacular, it is short on clear transliteration and detailed grammar. Clark's *Introduction to Nepali*, on the other hand, although comprehensive in grammar and extremely well-conceived in structure, is both old-fashioned and quirky, and remains most suitable for a determined student comfortable with linguistic terminology. In contrast, *Teach Yourself Nepali* is grammatically accurate but never boring. It is a serious language coursebook, but at all points very accessible. It is intelligently-structured, well-written, and most important of all, fun, and in so being will become the definitive all-round Nepali language book for the foreseeable future.

### Notes and Acknowledgements

1. A much earlier and abbreviated form of this review will be published in *IIAS Newsletter*, No. 21, under the title 'A Nepali Language Feast (one full course)'. The earlier review deals only with the *Teach Yourself Nepali* book by Hutt and Subedi, and not with the other language textbooks.
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